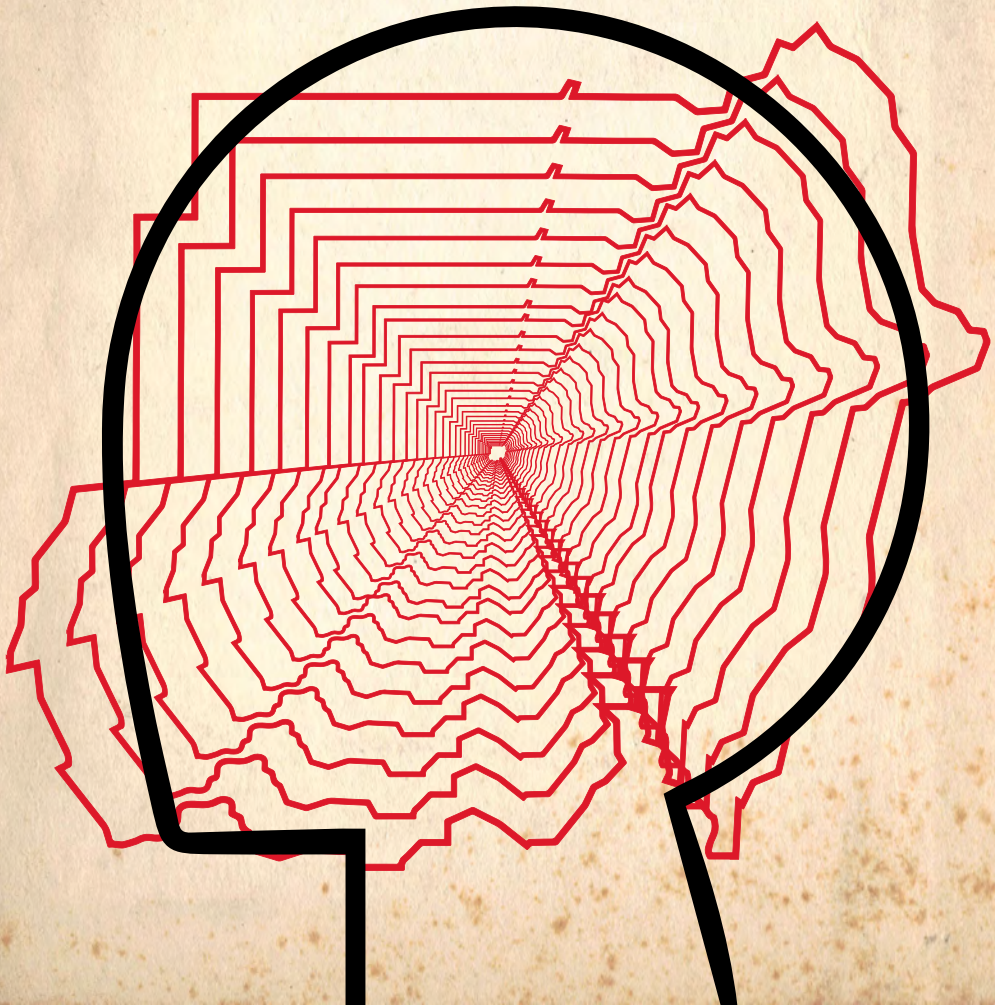
Politically Unconscious

The Psychic Aftermath of the Sudanese Revolution

Mohamed Khougali



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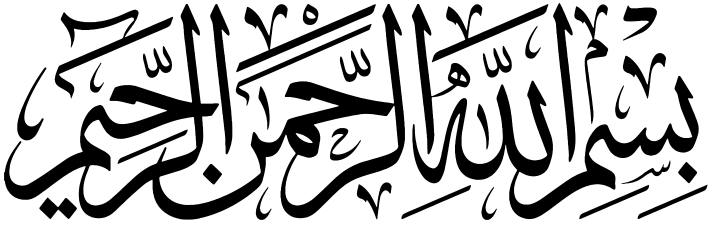
A special dedication to my wife, Zenobya, without whom I would be incomplete. Our daughter, Sabreen, who is an endless fountain of joy and hope. And to comrades Mohammed, Mohammed and Mohammed—for a great many things.

I would like to extend my gratitude to friend and editor Ruehl for his contributions and patience which helped shape this book. In the same vein, I would also like to thank Róisín Dubh, Jessica at Peace, Land & Bread, and Iskra Books more generally, for allowing me this opportunity to write about an important topic. This work would not be possible without their help—or as comprehensible without Joshua Viviers, who has dedicated time and effort in ensuring its coherence.



شهداؤنا ما ماتوا ... عايشين مع الثوار

"Our martyrs are not dead ...
they're alive with the revolutionaries"

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Map of Sudan and Surrounding Region

Glossary of Abbreviations

DMNL	Democratic Movement of National Liberation
EMNL	Egyptian Movement for National Liberation
FAD	Federal Army of Darfur
FFC	Forces of Freedom and Change
GGC	Graduates' General Congress
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
LSU	League of the Sudanese Union
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
NIF	National Islamic Front
NISS	National Intelligence and Security Service
NRC	Neighbourhood Resistance Committee
NUP	National Unionist Party
PDP	People's Democratic Party
PDF	Popular Defence Forces
RSF	Rapid Support Forces
SARC	Sudan Awakening Revolutionary Council
SLM/A	Sudan Liberation Movement/Army
SMNL	Sudanese Movement for National Liberation
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SWTUF	Sudan Workers' Trade Union Federation
UNITAMS	United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan

A Note from the Editor

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has historically existed as a zone where global systems of accumulation are inseparable from processes of abandonment and destruction. The imperialist, Zionist, and capitalist aggressions and destabilisations that have come to define the region have routinely proved themselves as the central mechanism through which capital stabilises itself by converting destruction into value and strategic advantage. (After all, industrial production depends on securing labour, raw inputs, and natural resources at the lowest possible cost). These tragedies have consistently enabled this condition by restructuring access to territory and populations, making labour cheaper, materials easier to appropriate, and resources more readily extractable. As Kadri puts it, "[a]ccumulation in the Islamic world remains centred on the export of raw material, and in particular, oil. And because war for the sake of war is primary to the global economy, Islamic states, by their very poverty, serve as fertile grounds for continuous conflicts that contribute to the exponential rise of waste."[1] The trail of rubble and corpses, from Sudan to Gaza, are a fundamental precursor to industrial expansion. It is in this way Sudan and Palestine are inextricably linked.

Yet, during the last few weeks, while this book sat stuck in the editing process, we have witnessed a historical rupture in MENA and the global political order. The illegal war waged against Iran by the US and Israel has put the logic that previously structured (and stabilised) the MENA security system, including the assumption of Israeli strategic invulnerability and permanent Western military primacy, under visible strain. This moment has produced conditions in which reformist politics

1 Ali Kadri, *The Accumulation of Waste: A Political Economy of Systemic Destruction* (BRILL, 2023), 480.

have lost practical significance: diplomatic bargaining, sanctions relief frameworks, gradual nuclear restrictions—the standard reformist instruments used during the previous decade—have lost all immediate operational relevance because the conflict is no longer organised around those instruments. What has emerged instead is a conjuncture in which radical political strategies become thinkable and actionable because the existing symbolic order is already undergoing violent reconfiguration.

Can the Zionist entity survive this latest round? Even if the state structure persists, the aura of strategic inevitability and institutional permanence that has surrounded it for decades will surely not survive intact. Now, every radical intervention—political, economic, ideological—almost certainly contributes, however incrementally, to the erosion of that certainty. Within this context the strategic horizon shifts. While we are unable to destroy capitalism at this juncture, the destruction of Zionism would reorganise the regional economy of power. It would represent a recalibration of the geography through which both accumulation and waste are distributed and through which the military-industrial circuits anchored in Israel feed the broader imperial architecture that structures MENA and beyond.[2] Indeed, the long-term objective of overcoming capitalism remains structurally central, but the immediate terrain of struggle must condense around particular geopolitical formations that anchor capitalist and imperial power in specific regions.

Allow me to write from the standpoint of visuality. The current conjuncture linking Sudan and Iran is structured by a managed split between what is hyper-visible and what is unseen. In Sudan, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) operate as a mechanism of extraction, converting territorial control into resources and embedding violence directly within circuits of accumulation. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), in turn, serves as the principal external mediator of these flows, integrating Sudanese resources (oil, gold, bodies…) into global markets and sustaining the RSF through logistical and financial support. Sudan thus functions as a zone of the unseen: the RSF's violence is systematically obscured, allowing extracted resources to circulate without their conditions of production appearing. Value is thus inseparable from a regime that detaches commodities from

2 See: "Borderline Fantasy—On Israel's Interest in Eswatini." *Review of African Political Economy*, May 30, 2025. https://roape.net/2025/05/30/borderline-fantasy-on-israels-interest-in-eswatini/

the images of violence that produce them. The UAE extends this regime by staging a controlled field of hyper-visibility. Its landscapes of finance and luxury operate as visual buffers, where circulation appears seamless (organic even) precisely because the violence underwriting it has been displaced and excluded from representation.

Iran's intervention disrupts this arrangement at the level of the image.[3] Refineries and data centres collapse in plumes of smoke under bombardment; some Tel-Aviv suburbs have been reduced to Gaza-esque piles of rubble; oil tankers burn in Gulf ports; drones strike lavish Dubai penthouses... Through the image, Iran has, in some part, collapsed the distinction between zones of extraction and zones of circulation, forcing the system to confront what it had previously repressed: that its smooth functioning depends on the continual displacement of violence *elsewhere*. The result is a crisis of visibility—and we should therefore not be surprised by the repressiveness in which both Israel and the UAE have responded to the circulation of information and images depicting the unfolding destruction. When the infrastructure of circulation itself becomes a site of visible rupture, the disavowal underpinning the system falters.

For this reason, the moment demands a recalibration within leftist political practice. A recurring limitation within contemporary leftist movements has been the moral puritanism that restricts alliances, tactics, and strategic thinking to narrowly defined ethical frameworks detached from the material realities of anti-imperial conflict. I echo Mohamed here: "We will not see communism in our lifetimes and, as such, to be a communist is simultaneously to be steadfast in your violence in the face of the *moment* [my emphasis]; to be informed by the past and to be a *martyr* [again, my emphasis] for the future."

Regarding the *moment*, perhaps now more than ever is the time for the left to embrace a psychoanalytical framework within its praxis. What does this mean? Within analytic practice, an interpretation may accurately explain a patient's symptoms, yet this accuracy does not guarantee its effect. Rather, what matters is the *moment* at which the interpretation

3 Similarly, Yanis Iqbal contrasts the "metaphysics" of the oppressor with the "physics" of the oppressed, framing October 7 as a disruption of the status quo and asking: "wasn't it Hamas that disregarded the *norms of civilization* [my emphasis] by launching Operation al-Aqsa Flood?" See: Yanis Iqbal, *The Sword and the Neck: Reading the al-Aqsa Flood* (Iskra Books, 2025), 3.

is articulated. If radical critique is delivered too early, it may fail strategically since the patient still relies on the existing symbolic order. The analyst must therefore determine the correct moment at which the patient can confront what has previously been repressed. Now is the correct moment. If the present rupture—a very narrow window—is to be meaningfully engaged, leftist puritanism must be abandoned in favor of a more concrete orientation towards immediate militant anti-imperialism.

But does one's support for Iran in this current conflict not also imply support of those aspects of its state that may be regarded as repressive or anti-communist? Materially, yes. There is no abstract alignment that bypasses the concrete operations of the state. To take a side is to be implicated in the totality of its practices, not merely those that can be selectively affirmed. Any attempt to isolate a purified geopolitical position from the actually existing mechanisms of repression is obviously illusory. But this is the *martyrdom* required of the left. Not one of physical death, but of a symbolic death of leftist morality; the death of the expectation that one's political commitments remain morally intact.

Of course we know that we are not dealing with a battle between oppressor and oppressed, but the assertion that both sides oppress—while descriptively true—is analytically insufficient. It collapses qualitatively (and quantitatively) distinct forms of violence into a single category and thereby obscures the structural differences that organise them. The issue is not to deny that the Iranian regime *kills people* but instead to distinguish this from the *corpses* that are *fabricated* by the US-Zionist regimes.

I borrow, regretfully, from Heidegger here. His account of modern technology as a mode of revealing in which beings are ordered as standing-reserve provides a strong conceptual basis for differentiating between these forms of violence. To say that the US-Zionist apparatus *fabricates corpses* is to indicate that killing has been subsumed into a technical process that strips it of its existential and symbolic dimensions. Victims are no longer encountered as subjects whose deaths carry meaning within a human horizon but are processed as units within an operational sequence.

Against this, the violence exercised by Iran (on its own people—not the defensive retaliation against Israel and America), while real and often brutal, does not operate through the same level of technological and

ontological mediation. It remains within a register in which killing still appears as an act rather than as a function of a system that has absorbed death into its normal operations. To support Iran in this context is therefore to support Sudan; it is to situate oneself against a form of power in which violence has become fully technologised, fully integrated into systems of accumulation and waste, while knowing that such a position cannot be reconciled with a stable moral identity. It requires the acceptance that one's stance is constituted through contradiction, that it involves complicity, and that it abandons the assurance that politics can be conducted without remainder.[4]

Ruehl Muller
South Africa, 2026

4 In this regard, one might also add that racialised subjects have long been instructed to quiet down on the race question in order not to upset the fragile equilibrium of liberal consent or alienate the white working class. It may therefore be necessary to reconsider the terms of that consent itself, shifting attention beyond that of the minoritarian minority (those deemed to *belong*) and toward the racialised global majority who *do not belong*.

Introduction

Following the outbreak of the Sudanese civil war on 13 April 2023, there has been renewed attention on Sudan—just as there was during the Sudanese revolution of 2018–19 and the genocide in Darfur in the early 2000s. Every once in a while, there seems to be acute media attention on the former largest country in Africa. These sporadic frenzies of media attention go as far back as the late 19th century, with the revolt against the Anglo-Egyptian colonisation of Sudan. (Famously, the poem *Fuzzy Wuzzy* by Rudyard Kipling was popularised at the time as a tribute to the fighting strength of the Sudanese against the British.)

However, seldom do these reports present a continuous picture of Sudan, or elaborate on its historical dynamics. The attention is short in both span and depth. As such, the framing of historical events is limited to the most obvious binaries of the time—protagonist contra antagonist: nationalism contra tribalism; anti-colonialism contra colonialism; African contra Arab; Burhan contra Dagalo (more commonly known by the mononym 'Hemedti')[1], etc. These narratives obscure more than they clarify as they do not offer concepts of trans-history that might jolt reporting out of the reductionist lull of a tautological stagism.

The reflections in this book try to present:

1) a brief history of Leftist movements in Sudan;

2) the revolutionary potential of psychotherapy in addressing psy-

1 Abdel Fattah al-Burhan is the current head of the Sudanese Armed Forces, the national army of Sudan; Muhammad Hamdan Dagalo Musa is the head of the Rapid Support Forces, the paramilitary group that is responsible for the destruction of west Sudan. These two figures represent the main belligerents of the current civil war in Sudan.

chological and social contradiction;

3) how to view the current context when expanding the scope of analysis to include a trans-history of a continuous revolution and go beyond the binaries of the moment; and

4) a note on society, informed by conversations that were taking place during the revolution of 2018–19.

These reflections were borne from a shorter piece on the history of the Left in Sudan—a history that seems to be somewhat hidden, or at least clustered together with other forces in a matter-of-fact way, or conflated with elite politics in the condominium center. While taking part in the revolution of 2018–19, this research was both urgent and practical. Dissatisfied with the idealised visions of the futures envisaged by the many factions, and the exclusive elite spaces in the condominium, I began researching and organising more radical circles to encourage more revolutionary and militant activism.

After the usurpation of the revolution by international organisations, political parties, and the military and paramilitary, the revolutionary spirit was tamed and fractured. Many of us entered a state of reflection. For me, this was marked by erratic reading, driven by questions of 'what went wrong?' and 'how can it be corrected?' It became clear that we, on the Left, were not at all ready for this moment—or, more accurately, not as organised as we should have been. Not only that, but our perspectives were theoretically immature, our goals shortsighted, and the hubris of the revolution made us blind with arrogance to the pitfalls of nationalist politics. Of course, there are dynamics that hindered a democratic transition that were outside the control of the revolutionaries.

It was in this moment of defeat that I decided to start writing about the history of the Left in Sudan. This forms the first part of these reflections, which I leave for the reader to draw their own conclusions from. Personally, two paramount lessons I drew from this history are:

1) the infantilisation caused by aligning with the sectarians and liberals;

2) Abdul Khaliq Mahjoub's (first general secretary of the Sudanese Communist Party) insistence that the (religious) poor be an essential element of the communist movement, and not cast aside due to

the disdain some elite Leftists feel toward them—viewing the poor as intrinsically aligned to sectarianism, which is a flawed perspective prevalent in postcolonial theory. The period of reflection was not solely focused on our shortcomings, but also on what had been successful and required further development.

I also worked as a psychotherapist during the revolution. This was an unintended practice. It began with merely advising a relative of a friend and evolved into active practice when I wasn't occupied with revolutionary work. I studied and worked in psychology in the UK, but had quickly become disenchanted with the theories underlying the various modalities (which are too numerous to elaborate here). During this experimental and revolutionary moment, I began to develop a new modality, one that marries praxis and psychotherapy.

In the second part of these reflections, I present certain case studies and anecdotes to demonstrate the revolutionary potential of this experimental psychotherapeutic modality, which is anchored in critical realist theory. Understanding that man reproduces society through reproducing himself in society allows us to abstract the interpersonal, to address the contradiction of society and the anxiety of man in the process of reproduction. What started off as a favour to a friend evolved into a revolutionary psychological tool—developed in the connection between client and practitioner—and expanded the revolutionary utility of that therapeutic relationship. This will be something I develop further, expanding its application beyond the Sudanese context into a modality of *praxis psychotherapy*.

The third part of these reflections contextualises the current civil war in Sudan. It is often reported along the binary of Burhan contra Hemedti, with occasional references to the role of United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the conflict, and the reactionary international organisations. All this may be true, but it does not adequately explain the situation in Sudan or how it affects the lives of people experiencing the conflict most directly—the dispossessed. In this section, I trace the dynamics of exploitation to the regions in Sudan where processes of accumulation by dispossession are most acute.

I also attempt to historically contextualise the current reality and how it came about beyond the binary of personalities, considering the

social and economic dynamics set forth by geopolitical and internal historic factors which brought about financialisation. After the defeat of the communists in Sudan in the early 1970s, there was an initiative to turn Sudan into a breadbasket for the Middle East. This was driven by animosity towards communism, the defeat of the Arabs in the 1973 Arab-Israeli War (otherwise known as the Ramadan War, or Yom Kippur War), the financial reform to secure international funding, Gulf countries investments into the country, IMF regulations, and so on.

This has intensified a dynamic of financialisation, affecting the military sector deeply and fueling the race for arms-for-hire seen in many parts of the world. This dynamic was built atop the predatory labour and resource extracting relationships between the center and periphery that allowed the privatisation of the military to be formed along racial lines to promote hegemony and maintain the exploitation.

Finally, the last part of these reflections is an attempt to encapsulate some of the discussions and theories of change that were reflected upon after the usurpation of the revolution. This section follows the analysis from Part III, where dynamics of financialisation have facilitated class formation in west Sudan along ethnic lines, generating questions relating to the state's role in said facilitations.

It is also an attempt to articulate a theory of change that aligns with the theoretical foundation of these reflections—the same theoretical foundations that inform praxis psychotherapy. This part of the reflections should be read as an attempt at a philosophic note that is forged in the field of revolution.

These reflections represent notes from a revolution that may contribute to the theory and experience of what needs to be done now (and in the inevitable next revolution) through analysing history more comprehensively and learning from our failures and successes. It is my hope that these reflections succeed in clarifying the civil war in Sudan, informing future generations of revolutionaries of the pitfalls we failed to anticipate, and presenting a convincing revolutionary psychotherapeutic modality and theory of change.

Part I

The History of the Left in Sudan[2]

2 I wish to thank Zenobya Mubarak for her help with this chapter.

Continuation of an Irrational Revolution

The Left in Sudan has been reduced to insignificance. In this reflection, I attribute this collapse to sectarian politics, the moral anxiety born out of neoliberalism, and the ideological quagmire following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The result has been the implementation of economic, political, and social policies without any substantive critique or mass participatory consent, which has had the effect of disenfranchising the majority. Workers and peasants remain distrustful and indignant toward consecutive governments, but they have no organisational vehicle capable of expressing their malcontent.

The history of democratic revolutions is a history of the elites' containment of the masses.[3] The Sudanese revolution of 2018–2019 was borne out of the desperate situation created by the dictatorship. Later, the movement for change was co-opted by the ongoing bourgeois revolution that was crystallised by the country's independence from British colonialism with great curtailment of the working class and revolutionaries. This being the case, it is worth examining today's political reality, in relation to the once-prominent Left, in its appropriate historical context in order to comprehend the current moment and suggest changes that might reinvigorate the Leftist movements in Sudan. Before doing so, I would like to insert a correction to 'bourgeois revolution'.

The word 'bourgeois revolution' harbours different meanings and is difficult to articulate in a way that satisfies all users. However, there is an intellectual tradition that suggests capitalism was brought about by a bourgeois revolution wherein the capitalist bourgeoisie destroyed the fetters of feudal aristocracy to bring about a new epoch and with it liberal democracy. Some extend this triumphalism to the present and suggest that liberal democracy also defeated communism and fascism. Mentions of the bourgeois revolution usually reference how 17th and 18th century

3 Brian S. Roper, *The History of Democracy: A Marxist Interpretation* (Pluto Press, 2013), 217.

Europe transcended certain social formations to bring about capitalism (through said revolution).

This, however, is a tautological explanation for the advent of capitalism that must contradictorily accommodate both expressions of the English and French revolutions. "[T]he concept of bourgeois revolution is called upon to explain both cases (like England) in which revolution occurs precisely because capitalist social property relations are already well developed and an already dominant capitalist class must sweep away obstructions in the state, while subduing subordinate classes that stand in its way; and also cases (like France) in which, on the contrary, revolution occurs because aspiring capitalists (or a bourgeoisie we must assume consist of aspiring capitalists) must defeat a dominant non-capitalist class."[4]

The term 'bourgeois revolution' is thus historically complicated to place—and even further complicated when extended beyond the context of Europe so as to encompass the American revolution. By the time the term is applied to Sudan, it is so overly saturated that it is rendered flaccid, and deployed confusingly among terms such as democracy, capitalism, secularism, and modernity. In addition, some claims that a bourgeoisie brought about capitalism are historically stagist.

When the British colonised Sudan in 1898–99, capitalist property relations and modes of production were not dominant, and strong pre-capitalist classes were transformed vis-à-vis the Mahdist Caliphate. The Mahdist Caliphate was a movement against the Turko-Egyptian administration and early Anglo-Egyptian administration that was short-lived at the end of the 19th century. In 1956, when Sudan gained independence, capitalist property relations were already firmly established—in fact, independence did virtually nothing to subvert capitalist property relations. In the case of the Nimeiry administration, which lasted from the early 1970s to mid 1980s, capitalist property relations, via financialisation, were acutely intensified. To call all these events 'bourgeois revolutions' is inadequate; however, these events are historically linked. For this reason, and reasons I will elaborate on in Parts II and III, I will call this lineage in Sudanese history—when it came into contact with capitalism through colonialism by 'accumulation by dispossession' in 1898—as a

4 Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View* (Verso Books, 2002), 119.

continuation of an *irrational revolution*. The irrational revolution can be contextualised as an iteration of a black radical tradition.

It is also important to note that in Sudan, a prevailing derivative of the conception of bourgeois revolution holds significant influence among the elite, as it denotes a move to do away with 'tribalism' and bring about a new *rational* epoch—that is, the demonisation of the poor. What will be clear in the latter reflections is that these notions are deployed to maintain and intensify capitalist property relations. These sentiments are reminiscent of the ideological claim that dissolving the fetters of feudalism will bring about inevitable capitalism. It is a strong ideological pillar used to chalk up the violence brought about through dispossession by accumulation to tribal infighting, rather than the deep crisis of capitalism, a theme that will continue throughout these reflections.

Sectarianism

Sudan gained independence from British colonialism in 1956. In the years leading to independence, the governing National Unionist Party (NUP) merged the condominium professionals under al-Azhari, and the historic periphery sectarians under Sayyid Ali al-Mirghani.[5] The latter became increasingly frustrated with the former's secular tendencies, which were gaining momentum at the expense of the historic sectarians. Later in the same year, the coalition broke down and al-Mirghani formed the People's Democratic Party (PDP) to merge the two major sectarian parties, the Ummah Party and the PDP, into another coalition to oust the NUP. According to historian Mansour Khalid, this was "a defining moment in Sudan's post-independence history since it marked the beginning of the coalition of the two brother enemies, the two sectarian parties. This coalition enabled them to control politics, and through it economic power."[6]

5 John Voll, "Review: Islam, Nationalism, and Communism in a Traditional Society: The Case of the Sudan, by Gabriel Warburg," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 1980, 178.

6 Khalid Mansour, *War and Peace in the Sudan: A Tale of Two Countries* (Routledge, 2012), 80.

It is true that ever since, these two political forces have been entrenched in Sudanese politics; however, Mansour's liberal historiography sees the two sectarian parties as divergent because of the difference in their discursive character. Thus, Mansour does not take seriously the similarities of their historic emergence, a crucial dimension to understanding their political reproduction and hegemony.

The history of the two main sectarian groups in Sudan is crucial to Sudanese politics. The period of Turko-Egyptian rule of Sudan from 1820–21 to 1885 gave rise to the two aforementioned sects, both of them thoroughly traditionalist: the Mahdi sect and the Khatimiyyah sect (though the Mahdi sect came about towards the end of the Turko-Egyptian era and replaced it with a Caliphate). The political battles, and later merger, show how these two groups sacrificed political gains against colonialists for self-interest. Many would organise from bottom-up to demand change, only to have sectarians ride the wave of revolution and acquiesce to—or foil—any progress made by the many to preserve their class interest. They would usurp nationalist and revolutionary organisations, project their rivalry within them and undermine all efforts. This behaviour can be observed even during democratic periods in Sudan, including the usurpation of parliament.

The historic impetus of the Ummah Party is intrinsically tied to the Mahdist revolution of 1881, where al-Ansar—the sectarian population that identifies with Mahdism—opposed Turko-Egyptian rule and successfully seized power in 1885 in the name of the Chosen One, the literal translation of 'Al-Mahdi'. For many, this revolt contributed to the national identity of Sudan, where Al-Mahdi was seen as the liberator from the coloniser. This revolt would act as the ideological springboard for sectarian politics and is an image that the Ummah Party continues to project to gain support.

The other significant sectarian group, the Khatimiyyah—the sectarian population who identify with Sayyid Muhammad al-Mirghani—kept close ties with the Turko-Egyptian administration by mediating between the native population and their colonial rulers.[7] Islam entered Sudan through Sufi form, which is why this sect enjoys widespread ac-

7 Barbara Degorge, "Millennial Islam in Africa: Sufi Politics in the Sudan," *The European Legacy*, 2000, 203.

ceptance. Some accounts trace Sufism in Sudan as far back as the 16th century.[8] Al-Mirghani was an Egyptian who roamed Sudan, gaining religious prominence, and who belonged to the Sufi Islamic school of *Tariqah Khatimiyyah*. This Egyptian heritage and the sect's mediating role with the Turko-Egyptian administration influenced the PDP's politics, encouraging the group to maintain close ties with Egypt since the sect enjoyed widespread popularity in both countries. The difference in authority, legitimacy, and history inevitably augmented the rivalry between the two groups. Their traditionalist ideological commitments and the history of their emergence, however, means they share the same class interest.

The Mahdist revolution and Caliphate of 1885 was short-lived. The 1898 Battle of Omdurman was the final blow, delivered by Anglo-Egyptian forces, that collapsed the Mahdist Caliphate. While the Mahdist revolution ended the Turko-Egyptian rule that had administered Sudan since 1821, the collapse of the Caliphate marked the beginning of British colonialism of Sudan. The British colonial period, spanning 1898 to 1956, was one of incubation, wherein nationalism was fostered. The significant events of this period cannot be furnished justly within the scope of this piece, however; there are a couple of events that deserve more attention than others.

Pre-Independence

The Mahdist war against the British was wrapped with a religious Messianic cosmology. The next significant uprising was during the British colonial period in 1924; its tone was more resolutely anti-imperialist. It was inspired by, among other events, an article written by one of the founding members of the League of the Sudanese Union (LSU) and submitted to *Al-Hadârah* newspaper. The LSU was one of the more serious political organisations in the 1920s, disseminating anti-colonial propaganda and calling for unification with Egypt. The article exemplified the attitude and demands of national organisations, but it was not

8 Daisuke Maruyama, "Sufism and Tariqas Facing the State," *Orient*, 2011, 6–7.

approved for publication.[9] The piece included three main confrontational points:

1. Sudan needed a guide to reach independence, and it is for the Sudanese people to choose this guide.

2. It called for the widening of the scope of education, ending government monopoly over the sugar industry, and appointing Sudanese citizens to senior positions.

3. It criticised religious and tribal chiefs for their loyalty to British authorities.

The article was considered too provocative by the British administration, but its sentiment was popular, contributing ideologically to the revolution two years later. This event, compounded by the cultural and political activism of the League and other organisations, played a role in igniting the 1924 uprising. The uprising, however, was crushed by the British with great prejudice. As evidenced by these events, the greatest existential threat to British colonialists was the intelligentsia and the educated classes of Sudan.

> Not a single school was opened during the decade following 1924 except in the Southern provinces ... the Military Colleges were closed down. The courses for training Sudanese administrators were discontinued ... The sending of students to Beirut (as an alternative to Cairo), which had been started in 1922, was stopped.[10]

This nationwide suppression required concentrated effort from the British side. However, this effort was eased due to the outbreak of World War II. Britain had to reconsider its policy towards its Asian and African colonies, meaning the suppression of Sudanese intellectuals was alleviated somewhat. Contemporaneously, Sudanese troops fought for the British against the Italians outside Sudanese borders. These two events—the easing of suppression and the participation in the war—seeped into the political consciousness of the Sudanese population's ideas relating to governance and nationalism. In February of 1938, inspired by the Indian National Congress, the Graduates' General Congress (GGC) was established.

9 Tareq Y. Ismael, *The Sudanese Communist Party: Ideology and Party Politics* (Routledge, 2015), 4.

10 Muddathir Abdel Rahim, "Early Sudanese Nationalism: 1900–1938," *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1966, 53.

Headed by al-Azhari, the GGC started as an organisation whose major interests were related to social and educational activities. It later morphed into a highly political organisation that shaped the discourse of the liberals and the Left by setting clear goals and aspirations. Though at its inception it aimed at unifying national movements, the organisation was also a host for the political rivalry between Khatimiyyah and the Mahdists. Khatimiyyah stood against any cooperation with the colonial regime and was in favour of uniting Sudan with Egypt; the Mahdist faction's position was more contradictory—they cooperated with the colonial government while also calling for independence.

Though these two foes inhabited the same organisation with some harmony and compromise, the more political the GGC became, the more antagonistic the rivalry became. It reached its crescendo in April 1942, when a memorandum was presented by the GGC to the governor-general of Sudan calling for Sudan's independence. The document also included cancelling subsidies to missionaries; non-renewal of the Sudanese Plantation Syndicate contract; abolishing 'Closed Areas' laws; requiring Sudanese to approve the budget and laws; allocating 12% of the budget to education (and for the committee to be made up of mostly Sudanese); separating the judiciary from the executive; legislation defining Sudanese nationality; the stopping of arbitrary immigration to Sudan; prioritising Sudanese in government posts; prioritising Sudanese to exploit the country's agricultural, commercial and industrial resources; and committing companies to allocating a proportionate number of their posts to Sudanese. The colonialist civil secretary replied:

> In claiming to represent all the Sudanese and in attempting to turn itself into a political national body, the Graduates' Congress not only could not retain the co-operation of government but could not hope for continuance of recognition ... There can be no restoration of that confidence until the Congress has so re-organised the direction of its affairs that the government can rely on having its wishes respected and its warning observed ...
>
> The Congress must realise that it is the duty and business of the Sudanese government alone, having paramount regard to its tutelary obligations to the people of the Sudan, and in consultation if need be with the Governments of the two partners in the Condominium, to decide the pace at which this association and this development shall proceed.[11]

11 Ismael, *The Sudanese Communist Party*, 10–11.

This response catalysed a sectarian split between the two factions within the GGC, leading to its ultimate dissolution. This transformed the two factions into their respective political party forms: the al-Ashiqqa Party (Khatimiyyah) and the Umma Party (Mahdi). This was a major, if not *the* major, instigator that turned sectarian politics into representative politics—the common denominator being elite sectarian interests. It also points to the elasticity of convictions, the acquiescent and malleable position of sectarian leaders motivated by self-interest.

This was exemplified in the positions both sectarian factions took during Sudan's recent history. The Khatimiyyah faction were colonial liaisons between native and government, only to oppose the British and advocate unity with Egypt when the supporters were Egyptians. For the Mahdists, where once they rebelled against both the Turko-Egyptian and Anglo-Egyptian forces, they now stood with their supporters: British colonists. This has been a common theme in Sudanese politics ever since.

The Left

The condominium liberals and the Leftists challenged the sectarian parties, and more often than not, liberals would compromise on positions to gain the support of sectarians who had greater sway over politics. Like many Leftist movements around the world, Sudan's was overwhelmingly tied to anti-imperialist activism and the critique of labour exploitation. Also, like many Leftist movements around the world, they were systematically suppressed.

Leftist activism in Sudan can be traced back to the two above-mentioned events: British participation in WWII and the alleviation of colonial suppression. There were two significant movements that birthed lasting Sudanese Leftist movements. The first was Egypt's 1944 Democratic Movement of National Liberation (DMNL), commonly referred to as *Umm Durman* after its periodical, which helped recruit members and disseminate Leftist literature.

Britain maintained a friendly relationship with the Soviet Union during the war. As a result, Marxist literature was readily available at the libraries and Soviet propaganda was disseminated with very little

hindrance. There was a British soldier by the name of Herbert Storey, a member of the Communist Party in Britain, who used to host loose-knit discussion groups, providing Marxist analysis of the Sudanese situation. This was the second group.

On 10 August 1945 in Khartoum, a joint meeting took place to establish the Sudanese Movement for National Liberation (SMNL), marking the amalgamation of the soldiers' discussion group and the *Umm Durman* group. The former wanted to maintain affiliation with the British Communists, while the latter preferred the Egyptian Movement for National Liberation (EMNL). Due to interpersonal conflict within the movement the first president of the SMNL stepped down in 1947. In 1949, Abdul Khaliq Mahjoub entered the scene. He was the influential chairman of the SMNL (and later, of the Sudanese Communist Party).

Prior to Mahjoub's ascendancy, the SMNL's main focus was on independence. During his early years as chairman, there was a shift in strategy. The issue for Mahjoub was the overrepresentation of elite intellectuals within the movement, a faction who were prejudiced against the religious peasantry and did not consider them a revolutionary class. The 1950's strategies were to support and unite a number of groups: the Peace Partisans, the National Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights, the Sudanese Women's Union, and the Congress of Sudanese Students. In addition, Mahjoub's position towards religion was a progressive and unusual one for communist parties across the Arab world at the time:

> My idea is to call for the unity of the Sudanese ranks: Muslims, Christians, pagans, and non-religious elements against imperialism, their only enemy. The aim is the independence of the Sudan and the establishment of a system that ensures prosperity for the people and realises their aspirations. The forces which hinder the happiness and freedom of the Sudan, whether Muslim or Christian, cannot be the forces of Islam ... The only enemy of communist ideology in this country is imperialism and its agents.[12]

Even with these ambitious strategies, the Communists, ranging from about 1,000 to 1,500 at the time, faced two existential and ideological threats. First, the movement was initially allied to the Ummah Party; its automatic support for the Ummah was incongruous with communist principles and could mean the Ummah Party's domination of Sudanese

12 Ismael, *The Sudanese Communist Party*, 19.

politics after independence. Even supporting its counterpart, Al-Ashiqqa, produced similar quandaries, and an alliance with them "could weaken the position of the Sudanese worker and peasant vis-à-vis the Egyptian bourgeoisie, due to the comparative strength of that class under King Farouk, President Naguib, and even Nasser."[13]

The second threat was the awkward situation with the Soviet Union. The Soviets steadfastly supported Gamal Abdel Nasser, who for them represented socialism in the Middle Eastern and North African region and opposed British and American imperialism. The USSR's ironclad support for Nasser meant that any recognition of a Left in Sudan would dilute and potentially antagonise Nasser's authority among Leftists. These challenges to the Sudanese Left were tactically circumvented three months after the proclamation of independence. In April 1956, the words "let us turn the party into a major social force" were incanted, and the communists shed their SMNL skin to inhabit their new skin under the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP).

The SCP composed a robust vision and strategy to deal with the Sudanese situation: socialising large estates, undertaking land distribution and industrialisation, fostering ideological commitment to socialism and the USSR, and opposing American imperialism. The two distinctive policies advocated by the SCP at the time were: first, the refusal to accept American aid under the Eisenhower Doctrine; and second, engaging with liberal movements to counteract the hegemonic influence of the Ummah Party.

In February 1957, Sudan and the US's relationship began to warm under the coalition of the sectarian government, and the Sudanese government officially requested military and economic assistance. Naturally, this antagonised Egypt under Nasser and the civil façade between Sudan and Egypt gave way. This reawakened the dormant tensions between the Ummah and PDP (formerly Al-Ashiqqa) within the coalition. The Ummah held a more hostile attitude towards Egypt and wanted to renegotiate the terms of the 1929 Nile Water Agreement (which granted Egypt veto power over any construction projects on the Nile or its tributaries and an annual water allocation of 48 billion cubic meters, while Sudan was entitled to only 4 billion cubic meters out of an estimated average

13 *Ibid.*, 20.

annual yield of 84 billion cubic meters). The Party also took a harsher stance on the question of The Halaib Triangle (in contrast to the PDP),[14] and was in favour of accepting American aid. By contrast, the PDP was sentimental toward the Egyptians. Given that Egypt considered America its arch-foe, the coalition held untenable positions vis-à-vis geopolitics. Expectedly, the coalition rapidly collapsed.

This again points to how sectarians would ride the wave of nationalism and later acquiesce to another form of economic colonialism for their self-interest and preservation, or sabotage any progress made if their demands were left unsatisfied.

This was a fortunate split for the NUP and SCP, liberals and Leftists respectively, now hoping to align with the PDP to create a coalition that would oust the Ummah Party. In October 1958, a National Front was created which included trade unions, student movements, and South Sudanese Leftist forces, along with the NUP. The Front inspired serious protests around the country. This was seen as a threat by the Ummah Party and, in the latter half of 1958, a coup plot was brewing in the house of the Ummah Party's leader. Those conspiring would be, among others, the prime minister, the minister of defence, and several army generals. The then-prime minister handed over the plans for the coup to the general commander of the armed forces and ceded power to him: General Ibrahim Abbud.

On 17 November 1958, the coup was successfully executed. Abbud's crackdown was severe. However, in his first two years, he and the two sectarian parties managed to find a compromise at the expense of the Sudanese Left, which was subject to sustained attacks during his reign. This again points to how sectarians would ride the wave of popular demands and nationalism only to later trade the momentum for privileges.

14 **Ed. Note:** The Halaib Triangle is a disputed border region along the Red Sea coast between Sudan and Egypt. Although both states claim sovereignty, it has been under Egyptian administrative control since the 1990s. The dispute stems from differing colonial-era boundary lines drawn in 1899 and 1902.

It's Always October for the Reds

Though their activities were clandestine, the SCP managed to galvanise and appeal to large proletarian, student, and peasant organisations. Above all, this was evidenced in the October 1964 revolution that ended Abbud's reign. The revolution was brought to an end when the signatories—both civilians and military—agreed to cease the state of emergency, forming a transitional government, ensuring the independence of the judiciary, releasing political prisoners and holding elections within five months.

> The October Revolution of 1964 is fondly remembered by many Sudanese as their very own 'Arab Spring'... The achievement of the civil protestors who led the October Revolution was not so much that they brought about a system of parliamentary democracy ... their triumph was managing to overthrow an authoritarian military regime, a feat their contemporaries in the Arab world would not be able to emulate for another two generations. In doing so, they ushered in a new and much more youthful generation of politicians. These included the many luminaries of the newly legalised SCP who were determined to revolutionise both society and political life, including Abd al-Khaliq Mahjub, Shafi Ahmad al-Shaikh and al-Turabi's old schoolmate, Muhammad Ibrahim Nugd.[15]

The communists' light dimmed shortly after the revolution—largely because they did not account for the difficulty of reform or the extent of their reactionary rivals' opportunism; the sectarians opposed the transitional government, criticising what they saw as its weakness and lethargic approach to democratic transition. The Ummah Party ordered its militia to protest in the streets. The indignation of these sectarians surfaced after the interim government's reform began to threaten the interests of the two sectarian parties' electoral advantage. These reforms included dismantling the native administration (also known as indirect rule—a system of governance the British used to safeguard their collaborators' interests; see Part III), investigating corruption and extending the vote to women. Naturally, these reforms would have weakened sectarians' stronghold on parliamentary politics.

15 Willow J. Berridge, *Hasan al-Turabi: Islamist Politics and Democracy in Sudan* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 51.

The reactionary sectarian pressure worked, and on 18 February 1965, the transitional government was pushed to resign and was replaced by a conservative government, with only one communist in office. Enter the second parliamentary period of Sudan. This period in Sudanese history was rife with personality politics. The concentration of political activity, therefore, was not on the people but rather on individual figures. Schizophrenically, out of the five governments that ruled during this period, none held office longer than 11 months. During this period, unemployment rose significantly. Government debt increased from SDG 309 million to 460 million in four years, while revenue grew only from 73 million to 93 million. Things were turbulent, to say the least.

Reactionaries and Counterrevolutionaries

Though the revolution was not successful for the communists, it did allow the SCP to slip out of the dimly lit alleyways and enter parliamentary politics. Mahjoub capitalised on these renewed liberties to enrich popularity and activitis of the SCP and the Leftists.

> The communists came out with eight seats and the leftist democrats (who were supported by the SCP) received three, while the NUP and the MB (Muslim Brotherhood) each won two seats in the open constituencies. In the 54 constituencies where it had its own or suspended other candidates, the SCP received 73,103 votes, or 17.3% of the total. Particularly in the capital of the country, the party got 26.5% of the votes, which markedly exceeded the 1.6% garnered during the previous election of 1958.[16]

Noticing the shifting tide and the popularity of Leftist movements in Sudan, the Muslim Brotherhood, along with the Ummah and NUP, manufactured a golden opportunity. On 8 November 1965, a student by the name of Shawqi Muhammad made the following statement at a forum on women in Islam:

> I am an atheist and am proud to have been liberated from the illusion of God. I am not sorry to have lost the dancing girls in heaven. As regards debauchery,

16 Ismael, *The Sudanese Communist Party*, 53.

> that is an innate characteristic of man, and debauchery was practised in the home of the prophet of God.[17]

The reactionary groups, energised by the electoral success of the communists, galvanised their base, and protests broke out. They inflamed the reactionary conservative sentiments to the point where the SCP headquarters in Omdurman suffered an arson attack. On 15 November, a motion was brought forth in parliament to dissolve the SCP; this motion was passed almost unanimously.

The SCP tried to combat the motion; a conference was called that included allies and progressive movements which asked for constitutional reform, a march for democracy, and the formation of a coalition for pro-democracy movements. However, the reactionary conservatives held a counter-conference for the defence of religious rights, in which they agreed on five main points:

1. Creating a permanent alliance to protect Islamic beliefs, and to combat any antagonists to this cause.
2. Amending the curriculum to be heavily influenced by conservative Islamic teaching.
3. Establish production and media centers for conservative Islamic literature and thought.
4. Combating communist outlets.
5. Drafting a sharia constitution for the immediate recommendation of the Constituent Assembly.

The head of the MB in Sudan, Hasan al-Turabi, presented a motion to parliament which called for the expulsion of the eight communists in parliament. What followed was the dissolution of the SCP, with their property being confiscated and their expulsion from parliament.

The SCP escalated this miscarriage of justice to the Supreme Court, which acknowledged the injustice and ruled in favour of the SCP, judging the amendment to be unconstitutional. The council that was created by the MB and sectarians did not accept this ruling. An appeal was submitted to a judge a couple of months later in Khartoum, where the court found in favour of the SCP, again. But the court's decision was not

17 Ibid., 36.

upheld by the government, and the head of the judiciary resigned once more due to this burst of fascism. The MB and the sectarians got their way. Shawqi Muhammad was not even a member of the Sudanese Communist Party.

The transformation of sectarian politics into parliamentary politics was thoroughly bourgeois; the same sectarian capitalists who enjoyed economic prominence during the colonial era entered parliament once they realised their economic potential was limited to land ownership, mediating and liaison roles. Once exposed to the economic potential of capitalist forms of production and property relations, their revolutionary appetite grew. For the Ummah Party, this can be seen in rhetorically opposing colonialism, while simultaneously acquiescing to American imperialism by accepting aid through the Eisenhower Doctrine. The Khatimiyyah, meanwhile, was in favour of uniting with Egypt—even though it surely would have led to an unfavourable coalition with Egypt, due to Egypt's attitude towards Sudan and relatively greater economic power.

Neoliberal Moral Anxiety

The contrived parliamentary manoeuvre by the MB and sectarians was a successful moral panic. However, it was not just moral panic that characterised this period. From the late 1960s through to the 1990s, neoliberal policies found their way into Sudanese society. Above all, this meant an increased acceptance of foreign aid and the restructuring of major agricultural initiatives in favour of financialisation and foreign investments. Due to financialisations, wealth was being concentrated among import-based franchises and the raw-material-export capitalists. Both practices greatly diminished the power of the labour force of Sudan and consequently impacted their social relations—something I will elaborate more on the psychological and political aspects of in Parts II and III respectively.

For the former group, the import of foreign goods and services meant the disincentivisation of skilled labour and the erosion of industry. For the latter, this meant encouraging cheap, precarious labour, dispossessed of their land by capital investments through low wages and land

privatisation. This was the work of the sectarians' invigorated revolutionary appetite for capitalist property relations (which ramped up under the dictatorship of Nimeiry). Thanks to their now-powerful political positions, they benefited most from these economic practices.

These top-down strategies and the sectarians' incompetence did not go unnoticed. The franchise import eroding national industrialisation and pushing prices up, while raw material exports dispossessed workers from land and pushed wages down. The situation was unstable. With an agitated citizenry, who saw personality politics for what it was, there was a thirst for a different type of politics. Sectarian politics glorifies the individual, not too dissimilarly to Donald Trump's prominence within the conservative movements in the US today. Neoliberalism displaces blame from the political system to the individual, it seeks to financialise the economy and blames the borrower and not the lender which emphasises individual success, or failure. All are cultural attitudes (often racist) that were intensified with financialisation and the aforementioned economic practices. With this individualised attitude to political and social life, more and more workers became disenfranchised and antagonised.

As was admitted by al-Turabi in an *Al Jazeera* interview, it was strategically pertinent to defame the communists, nowhere is this more evident than in the usurpation of parliament by the conservative forces. The MB took advantage of this situation and organised, effectively utilising the communitarianism within Islamic theology. They advertised themselves as antithetical to individualism, while simultaneously religionising individual responsibility. They also advertised themselves to be against what they claimed to be debaucherous, Western secularism and projected an image of modernism and reformation. Sudan, like most countries, was swept by the individual-consumerist neoliberal zeitgeist. The conservative Islamists managed to contain the liberals and communists by invoking communitarian politics in light of this zeitgeist. The cosmology they deployed to talk about individualism was twofold; they marked themselves as resolutely anti-Western, and were adamantly against any Western ideals, wherein communism was one such ideal (while capitalism was naturalised);[18] and simultaneously caricatured sectarians as a

18 One of the traits of the right wing is the conflating of liberalism and communism to invigorate the insular nationalism of the day. In both Global North and South rightwing movements, this conflation is communicated along conservative lines, clus-

backward-looking group who were easily swayed by illusory mysticism and tribalism.[19]

However, their politics were also compatible with capitalist property relations and the same financialisation that was the motive for many who flocked to join the MB in trying to leap beyond individualism. The MB came to ideologically encompass the divine right to private property (by expanding land ownership), the worldly test of charity and debt-repayment (by reducing taxes by atomising social anxiety), and the belief that misfortune strikes the divinely loved (by ignoring peasants' demands). This is characteristic of the neoliberal turn, and financialisation, whose proponents claim to be anti-state, only to use state-power to further the interests of the wealthy.[20] For all their talk of the divine, it was actually the state that institutionalised these ideologies. Fundamentally for the conservative Islamists in Sudan, God was the state to them: the Leviathan. Similarly, it is not the free hand of the market or the industrious spirit that distributes wealth freely and naturally, but the utilisation of the state by capital.

It must be said that there were streams of Islamism that were more socialist: everything belongs to God and thus nothing belongs to man (land distribution), all are equal in the eyes of God (egalitarianism), and we share custodianship of the land (an argument for the commons). Theological arguments to that effect. Nonetheless, the stream that overwhelmingly stood out politically was of a conservative complexion in the form of the MB and the National Islamic Front (NIF), both affiliated with Hasan al-Turabi.

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tering liberalism and communism under the rubric of 'the Left' to invoke the attempt to destroy national/ethnic/religious/gendered identity and values vis-à-vis bolstering nationalist politics. This type of politics is made more ubiquitous as liberals try to capture the nationalist movement for electoral relevance and drift ever more rightward.

19 This is a trait of the moderniser, whose insistent ideological drive to 'modernise' has given them *carte blanche* to renege on rights won by labour movements and increase inequality in the drive to modernise. While in the Global North it unfolds in the ideological technological rhetoric of *entrepreneurialisation* of the gig workers, in places such as Sudan, it is to caricature the (agricultural) worker as essentially tribalistic and thus needing to be proletarianised before having autonomy. Both reform movements deploy the terminology of modernisation to cloak the obvious exploitation—see Part III.

20 Quinn Slobodian, *Hayek's Bastards: Race, Gold, IQ, and the Capitalism of the Far Right* (Princeton University Press, 2025), 18.

Due to the intense state crackdown on communists, the conservative Islamists did not face significant opposition from the SCP and were thus able to co-opt the disenfranchised with their false communitarianism. This added to the disillusionment of the Left. The conservative groups demonised the Left not only ideologically, but also morally. Their strategic use of the (moral) anxiety borne out of neoliberalism and sectarian personality politics paid dividends. This was to continue and added to the blows suffered by the Left in Sudan that reduced its significance.

The Fracture Before the Break

As we have observed thus far, the period of clandestine existence for the SCP was longer than the periods of legitimate existence, and the attacks suffered were directed by dictatorial, parliamentary, and extra-parliamentary means. Nimeiry's era was the most significant era for the Left, and, as we shall see, in contemporary Sudanese history.

In May 1969, a military coup led by Gaafar Nimeiry overthrew the civilian government. Nimeiry was of the pan-Arab-socialist-Nasserist persuasion. This created a fracture within the SCP, with one faction supporting the Nasserite coup, and a minority, led by Abdul Khaliq Mahjoub, more skeptical.

This tension was amplified by the fact that Nimeiry brought members of the SCP into his regime without consultation from the party's leaders. This move aggravated the already fractious divide within the SCP. The first stage of Nimeiry's reign was a cautious harmony with the SCP. While political parties were officially dissolved, the SCP—already illegitimate—was unofficially politically active. It must be said that the multiple delegitimising campaigns against the SCP throughout Sudan's post-independence history harboured resentment among SCP actors. As mentioned above, the campaigns against the Left were extremely prejudiced, unconstitutional even, and one could almost empathise with the faction that aligned with Nimeiry's dictatorship. It must also be stressed that the SCP had no active role in the May 1969 coup.

The primary concern from the Mahjoub faction was that the party's blasé attitude toward the coup would legitimize the dictatorship. Another

critique presented by this faction was that the alliance engendered an anti-communist process of minority rule. There was also the concern that the SCP might be absorbed into the regime and lose its identity and autonomy, as well as abandon its Marxist-Leninist ideological commitment. Abdul Khaliq Mahjoub brought a motion to an SCP meeting in August 1970 to untether the party from the regime, which was passed with a 75% majority.

In a pan-Arab style, Nimeiry, Gaddafi (then-president of Libya), and Sadat (then-president of Egypt) finally made public the secretly negotiated Benghazi Agreement, which proposed a tripartite union between Sudan, Libya, and Egypt. The SCP produced a critique of this pan-Arab union: that there was no consultation with the Sudanese, Egyptian, or Libyan people. The SCP called for a participatory discussion and a popular plebiscite on the matter.

After this, tensions between Nimeiry and Mahjoub escalated, with Nimeiry using his media platform to criticise the SCP. The SCP, in turn, called for the overthrow of the Nimeiry regime. Nimeiry responded by arresting Mahjoub and deporting him to Egypt. These feuds culminated in an SCP coup on 19 July 1971, carried out by a minority of the Party and facilitated and coordinated by two compatriots who were both in London. The coup leaders criticised party infighting and its lax attitude toward Nimeiry. Six days before the coup, the Party's politburo convened to discuss the suggested coup by the communist officers, but without concrete convictions or outcomes. Though the coup was somewhat successful, outside influence ensured its short lifespan.

Nimeiry's chief of the army played an instrumental role in foiling the coup. During the coup, he was on his way to Moscow—where the Soviets declined to see him. He then visited Egypt and Libya, convincing Egypt to send pro-Nimeiry paratroopers back to Sudan, which had been stationed at the Suez Canal. The Libyans, possibly with Western help, grounded the plane from London that was carrying the two co-conspirators. Nimeiry's chief of the army also utilised Libyan radio waves to call on soldiers who supported Nimeiry to quash the coup. On 22 July, the coup was crushed. July and August of that year saw the murderous end to the Sudanese Left, with 2,000 communists killed and another 3,181 arrested indefinitely. Mahjoub was executed in this purge. The conservative Islamists gained popular momentum for the aforementioned rea-

sons, and Nimeiry eventually warmed up to them. The Left had suffered its worst blow yet—and since.

The Left in Sudan

There is a consensus that Nimeiry's purge was the ultimate blow to the SCP, which was the major vehicle for the politics of the Left. While the SCP is still in existence and is one of the more active parties in Sudan, its popularity has waned significantly. During the '90s, after the collapse of the USSR, there was an ideological vacuum within Sudanese communist thought; where once the SCP took some ideological cues from the USSR, its collapse marked an ideological crash. The 'Marxist experiment' and communism in general was heavily scrutinised. The SCP went into shock, and in the '90s they encouraged 'constructive criticism' in their periodical, *al-Midan*. Marxism was attacked; a serious discussion was being had to change the name from the Sudanese Communist Party to the Sudanese Socialist Party.

The Party's intelligentsia adopted liberal histories, suggesting that capitalism has globalised but not universalised, and thus before there can be any real socialist change, there needs to be a capitalist change. An absurd claim that had no kernel of truth to it, nor could it be evidenced in reality. This rendered the major Leftist organisation now liberal in ideology. The adoption of these histories served a particular purpose: to remain relevant, a post-hoc clarification for their failure to attract workers, and a justification to engage with liberal institutions, such as international non-governmental organisations. The identity crisis of the '90s for the Party demonstrated their detachment from the peasants and working class.

The patronage and dependence on the USSR meant a lack of confidence in their political analysis, strategy and engagement in their own realities. Like other broken parties, it had retired into a comfortable reproduction of Khartoum-centric politics. The Sudanese Communist Party was more active in the NGO sector and among international organisations than in the fields and communities of the poor across Sudan. For them, the poor were too sectarian and needed to be lectured, or bet-

ter still, the forces of capitalism needed to modernise them, before they could have a 'proletarian consciousness.'

Even today, the SCP leaders are more interested in meeting with other international organisations and actors, as 'foreign dissidents,' rather than engaging the dispossessed in Sudan. This speaks to the destruction of the Left in Sudan; the defeats endured have blunted their vitality. They have become too compliant and accepted that their fates are tied to the establishment, forcing them to act as a superficial counterbalance to an establishment that has been taken over by capitalists. They adopt the same attitudes towards the poor as the established forces.

Attitudes that are not too dissimilar to when the Green Party in Germany was trying to organise guestworkers in the '80s; or current left-wing forces in Germany trying to organise in the former East Germany; or the British Labour Party's attitude towards the poor in the early 2000s; or the Democrats' policy towards the southern US. The destruction of the Left in Sudan is a microcosm of the destruction of the Left worldwide. The reasons are not all to do with the downfall of the USSR, but this is a discussion beyond the scope of this piece.

I engaged the cadres of the SCP during the revolution of 2018–19 in an effort to organise militant activism. The cadres were busy revising transition history (feudalism to capitalism), engaged in postcolonial sophism, and were encouraged to work with the international NGO class and international cultural institutions. As Mahjoub had mentioned decades earlier, there was—and is—a distinct bourgeois and elite character to the current SCP.

Today

Today there is the Neighbourhood Resistance Committee (NRC)—an impressive, bottom-up organisation that was heavily involved in the revolution of 2018–19. It managed to mobilise a significant portion of the people involved in those events. It could be argued that the organisation was the crucial element that secured the success of the revolution by ousting dictator al-Bashir.[21] This point, in my opinion, should not be

21 **Ed. Note:** Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir was a former military officer who

stressed too strongly as it tends to idealise instead of contextualise, and any successful revolution must be sanitised from exclusionary ideals. It is a participatory, civilian-led, non-interest-based, horizontalist organisation. The more significant the NRC becomes, the more political interest it attracts. However, after noticing certain party infiltrations,[22] the NRC has resolutely come out as being against being formally associated with any party. There is also no ideological commitment, which can lead the NRC to operate within capitalist paradigms rather than opposing them. For example, the committee leader for my neighbourhood was invited to the Paris Club for whom meeting French President Emmanuel Macron was seen as a way of progressing their aims.

Our next step is to democratise the NRC due to its size, and present an argument for socialism which, I believe, would be accepted when contextualised concretely, not just ideologically (that is, politically, economically, and, most importantly, convincingly). The NRC faces logistical and political issues, mainly because it has no political autonomy and therefore cannot demand basic resources for the community it represents—resources such as bread and gas, which are scarce. To solve this issue, the NRC needs to conceptualise a macro and micro strategy to meet the demands of the neighbourhoods and masses.

A move towards nationalisation should be advocated, targeting agricultural conglomerates, mining companies and telecommunication systems, all of which have benefited from the aforementioned exploitation of workers through import franchise and export deskilling labour practices. More generally, the NRC should learn from the lessons of South Korea contra India in state-building agendas, specifically moving away from import-substituting industrialisation policies to an export-led industrialisation policy.[23] This would offer the opportunity to compete in the international market through cultivating relationships with industrialised countries so as to establish non-colonial and non-aid-dependent

held the title of President of Sudan from 1989 until being deposed in 2019.

22 Members from various political parties would join the NRC to influence their politics. The NRC started noticing that newcomers would try to sway internal dialogue and objectives to favour certain party lines.

23 Vivek Chibber, *Locked in Place: State-Building and Late Industrialization in India* (Princeton University Press, 2011), 44-47.

relations. Exports need to be coordinated with workers and communities, not elite interests.

While understanding that technologies created under capitalism internalise capitalist logic and help in the exploitation of labour, technological progress needs to be insisted upon from a labour-inclusive perspective and not seen as a determinant factor of transhistorical development. Agricultural technologies introduced to Sudan in the late '70s and '80s have had a devastating desertification effect and ruined topsoil. The labour force and communities dependent on wood and topsoil were reduced to low-skilled labour, adding to the disposable modern day slave labour used to generate the wealth in the Gulf countries.

If labour-oriented policies are successfully advocated for, the revenues will be used to set up state-owned agricultural projects, expand the commons to encourage reproduction in non-commercial cycles—especially when it comes to care, emotional, and reproductive labour. This, in essence, is the NRC's role in the revolution. The sit-ins they organised were micro-commons with expanded non-commercial reproductive labour. In addition, there needs to be investment in public media with a strong crackdown on private media companies. Also, a fair wealth tax, and a democratic distribution of taxes to different social sectors.

A good example that persists in the imagination of Sudanese society is the Gezira Scheme. Through the Gezira Scheme,[24] Sudan experienced one of Africa's greatest eco-agricultural innovations since the beginning of the 20th century, with profits from the agricultural scheme distributed to the tenants (40%), government (40%), and a smaller portion allocated to the Sudan Plantations Syndicate (20%).[25] So successful was the Gezira Scheme, it was deliberated how to implement it elsewhere in the continent.

Unfortunately for the NRC, due to the lack of macro ambition stemming from its non-political alignment, it started to dwindle. Where once they dictated revolutionary action—partly because of ideological reasons (see Part IV)—its presence faded. The reason for this, I believe, is that

24 **Ed. Note:** The Gezira Scheme is one of the largest irrigation projects in the world, centered in the Sudanese state of Gezira.

25 Robert O. Collins, *A History of Modern Sudan* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 44.

the NRC did not consider the day after the ousting of al-Bashir. It was focused on organising protests and revolution. This is due to certain historic factors: the clandestine nature of the SCP that prevented it from growing beyond the shadows; the crackdown on plural forms of expression under the conservative Islamists; and the sophism of the Left that is emblematic of a widening class divide along condominium and periphery lines. For example, in the condominium centers, the extent of the devastation of west Sudan is still not entirely recognised.

This is precisely why relocating the political capital to the west of Sudan would be one of the most serious responses to address the inequality and political disenfranchisement in Sudan. The first initiative is the initial step to reclaiming the means of reproduction by the workers and a push towards public ownership—that is, conceptualising a socialist industrial strategy (socialist modernity) while also repressing the tendency of capital by reproducing society non-commercially. The second suggestion is to produce to *use*, not exchange, and to tackle the monopoly of goods, services, and infrastructure (agriculture conglomerates are the only firms that can transport and reach remote regions, for example). The third is to encourage federalisation and place the political capital at the center of the most politically disenfranchised area in Sudan, which is the most important. (This point will be furnished more fully in Part III).

While the NRC does not have the capabilities to actualise these demands, energising a socialism that is bottom-up through the NRC would bring about similar suggestions—and may even influence creation of a new political party or revolutionise the SCP. It cannot be stressed enough that a salient way to ensure a move to a different type of politics and address the deeper political issues within Sudan is to move the political capital from Khartoum to the west of Sudan. In Sudan's current state, there needs to be a concentration on political solutions, and not just economics. These solutions and demands need to be sustained and need to resonate with labour demands. Finally, the revolution of 2018–19 has been usurped by the class that has been most organised: the military and the international NGO-consultancy class. A lesson to be learnt here, is that the class that organises inherits the revolution. This means moving away from the already organised, and regressive, international NGO sector, and creating new organisations.

In that spirit, today we see the horror going on in Sudan. Radical change will not come by one chosen way, but by many. However, not to stretch efforts too thin, I believe that Mahjoub's ideas need to be resurrected. There needs to be a return to workers' interests and not sophism. While the current moment presents its set of difficulties, we should keep in mind that another revolution is on the horizon, and if we are not organised, the same cycle of violence and dispossession will ensue. Revolution does not occur in the historic moment where decades turn to weeks—but rather in the monotony of everyday life.

Part II

Praxis Psychotherapy: Psychopolitical Symbiosis

> Psychiatry moves through the negative and is beholden to it. In other words, psychiatry is not countered by antipsychiatry as if by a foreign army marching on the backs of elephants over the mountain: it is founded in it and requires it for its dynamic permeation through the social world. But the negative spares none; in due time, the shepherds of men and architects of the great citadels of human reason would be characterised as rapacious villains and builders of prisons. Pinel's great unchaining is not just a mythic origin, it is a point on a circle—a revolution in the original sense of setting a practice in motion on an orbit suspended in space. Enchanting and unchaining are two overlapping scenes of a mad tragedy that begins where it ends.[26]

26 Sasha Warren, *Storming Bedlam: Madness, Utopia, and Revolt* (Common Notions, 2024), 25.

Knowledge Production at the Interstices of Revolution

Frantz Fanon made it a point to include, at the end of his *The Wretched of the Earth*, psychiatric notes of case studies while working during the Algerian War for Independence.[27] These case studies include persons affected by *violence*. From children murdering their classmates, to impotence caused by the humiliation of rape, to months without menstruation caused by psychosomatics. That episode of his magnum opus contextualises the historic moment through the intimate lens of a practitioner. Perhaps during the period, one is not in full grasp of the seismic shift and trauma the nation is soon to experience. This makes his account, in retrospect, a much-appreciated contribution to history. What better way to contextualise the happenings of the time than by psychiatric notes and comments on the state of the individuals affected by violence?

Inspired by his contribution, this reflection sets forth to elucidate the psychological reality clients inhabited during the Sudanese revolution of 2019. These anecdotes will be abstracted to explore the psycho-political symbiosis during that period, as well as historically. The mode of investigation used is based on critical realism. These extracts are taken from my work as a psychotherapist and should act as elaborations on the nature of exploitation under capitalism, as well as preliminarily presenting a case for a different form of practicing psychotherapy.

While Fanon's contributions are insightful and foundational to topics such as violence, postcolonialism, anticolonial struggle, the psychology of the colonised and coloniser, etc., he does not engage deeply with underlying psychological theories. The contributions in *The Wretched of the Earth* focus more on the political. I believe this was a missed opportunity for knowledge production at the interstice of revolution, where society's set reproduction is collectively challenged. Fundamentally what is missed is knowledge production around the relationship between man

27 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press, 1963), 254–311.

and society—or, in philosophical terms, how to study society in relation to nature, and how to study man in relation to society. Or, "to what extent can society be studied in the same way as nature?"[28]

Before engaging this question, my motivation for stressing this missed opportunity is due to the inadequacy of psychotherapy during the revolutionary moment in Sudan. During this moment, it was abundantly clear that popular modalities in therapy were insufficient and inadequate in addressing the psychological reality of this moment. Critiques have been levied at various psychotherapeutic modalities and psychology more generally. While some critiques are more structurally founded than others, I do not believe that psychology as a whole should be discredited. With that said however, what seems to be missing from the field of psychotherapy is (political) *praxis*.

During the Sudanese revolution, I was asked by a friend to counsel a family member with First Episode Psychosis (FEP), where cosmologies play a significant role in the development and treatment of FEP. It was an interesting case study that, like many that would follow, revealed the tension within psychotherapy. Considering that it is someone's cosmology, or worldview, that determines the treatment of FEP, it follows that treatment should equally be tailored according to the person's cosmology. In certain Sufi circles in Sudan—such as the one wherein the client's socialisation was formed—hallucinations represent a transcendence to a higher plain of spirituality and are endowed with a certain purity. This means psychotherapeutic treatment would be based on discourse and deontological claims about social reality. There may be reservations to this approach due to the diffuse nature of treatment, however. (For example, psychopathy as treated *clinically* cannot be generalised and thus loses structure).

There is the psychopharmacological treatment where, depending on multiple factors, a certain generation of antipsychotic medication would be administered within the first 3 months of presentation, followed by a strict regimen of psychotherapeutics and pharmacotherapy. However, this does not guarantee a successful outcome. Rather, it affects the percentage of success of the treatment, which could be lifelong. This raises

28 Roy Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism: A Philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences*, Routledge, 2015. 1.

multiple concerns such as typicality, ableism, quality of life, generalisability bias, etc. Though this case study presented its own complications, it was emblematic of a more fundamental psychotherapeutically unresolved matter: the relationship between man and society.

Popular modalities seem to be underpinned by social philosophies that do not address this issue in any resolute way, as I will try to demonstrate. Before attempting to address the relationship, and the methodological questions, my development of *praxis psychotherapy* is taken from my work during a revolutionary moment wherein it was motivated by praxis. This was necessitated by the moment's contradiction.

Praxis Psychotherapy

To what extent can society be studied in the same way as nature?

This complicated methodological question relates to psychological theory insofar as we understand man in relation to society and society in relation to nature. There are two prevailing traditions in understanding the relationship between man and society: the Weberian and the Durkheimian. The former emphasises that man creates and forms society, the latter emphasises that society creates and forms man. These traditions have varying expressions, e.g. classical empiricism, behaviourism, and positivism are aligned to the Durkheimian tradition while social-constructionism, hermeneutics, and methodological individualism are aligned with the Weberian tradition. These expressions are attempts at understanding the relationship between society and nature. These expressions and traditions underlie the current popular modalities of psychotherapy: behaviourism and (psychological) humanism, vis-à-vis cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and person-centered therapy.

Through his anthropological research, James Davies explores the outcomes of contemporary psychology, unveiling the damaging consequences of the behaviourist tradition to society and man.[29] Notwithstanding the damning outcomes of his research project focused on behaviourism, Davies diametrically dedicates some pages to the (psycho-

29 James Davies, *Sedated: How Modern Capitalism Created Our Mental Health Crisis* (Atlantic Books, 2021), 108.

logical) humanist tradition, which, according to him, follows the tradition of the Enlightenment.

Carl Rogers, the founder of person-centered therapy and one of the strongest proponents of the tradition—who believes in the subjectivity of science—can be placed firmly in the Weberian camp. He writes: "Science, as well as therapy, as well as all other aspects of living, is rooted in and based upon the immediate, subjective experience of a person. It springs from the inner, total, organismic experiencing which is only partially and imperfectly communicable. It is one phase of subjective living."[30]

On the other hand, the behaviourist tradition is committed to the idea that behaviour is fundamentally determinative—an atomistic fact. This places them firmly in the Durkheimian camp. B.F. Skinner, one of the prominent theorists for the behaviourist tradition, writes: "the free inner man who is held responsible for the behavior of the external biological organism is only a prescientific substitute for the finds of causes which are discovered in the course of a scientific analysis."[31]

At first, the methodologies that underlie these modalities may seem to be antithetical in answering the question of science (subjectivity contra atomistic fact). However, at a certain level of abstraction, they share fundamental similarities. Foremost, both methodologies of science cannot adequately distinguish between man and society, or society and nature. Their answer to the question of 'to what extent can society be studied in the same way as nature?' is that they are one and the same.

The behaviourist (classical empiricist) encourages a worldview that erodes the distinction between man and society, and society and nature—in that researching man can only be done through exploring his behaviour, and the nature of man is reduced to physicalism. This can be seen in Skinner's determinative anti-freedom.

For the humanist, the distinction is similarly blurred, insofar as they view 'living' as a subjective experience. That openness to experiences al-

30 Carl Rogers, *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1961), 222.

31 Burrhus F. Skinner, *Science and Human Behavior* (Macmillan, 1953), 447–448.

lows us to access the world and, according to Rogers, when we are open to experience, we are able to be "realistically constructive." If not, we become "socially destructive." In his methodology of science, man seems to be the constructor of society and, according to his openness, either destructive or constructive. This leads to the claim that man is prone to self-actualisation—among other platitudes—which are often nebulously defined.[32]

Both modalities then fail to acknowledge the situation of the individual in relation to society—meaning that the project of psychotherapy is not a praxis but a descriptive or corrective one.[33] This leads to the second similarity between the two, which is that the nature of man is resolved epistemologically, not ontologically.

It is essential to answer the question of 'to what extent can society be studied in the same way as nature?' in order to answer the ontological question of 'what is the nature of man?' Without answering the former, one is inclined to compensate for the latter with classical empiricism or discourses—i.e. evolutionary psychology or self-affirmation. The question regarding the nature of man, I believe, has fallen out of favour for various reasons within the Left, but nonetheless needs to be answered for any robust psychotherapeutic—and social—theory. The inadequate responses to this ontological question, I believe, continue to haunt social theory.

32 Rogers claims about the nature of man: "I find that man, like the lion, has a nature. My experience is that he is a basically trust-worthy member of the human species, whose deepest characteristics tend toward development, differentiation, cooperative relationships; whose life tends fundamentally to move from dependence to independence; whose impulses tend naturally to harmonise into a complex and changing pattern of self-regulation; whose total character is such as to tend to preserve and enhance himself and his species, and perhaps to move it toward its further evolution. In my experience, to discover that an individual is truly and deeply a unique member of the human species is not a discovery to excite horror. Rather I am inclined to believe that to fully be a human being is to enter into the complex process of being one of the most widely sensitive, responsive, creative and adaptive creatures on this planet." See Carl Rogers, "A Note on the 'Nature of Man,'" *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 1957, 201.

33 For person-centered therapy, the practice of psychotherapy is descriptive. Rogers writes that a counsellor must act as an 'alter ego' to the client and that, "it is the counselor's aim to perceive as sensitively and accurately as possible all of the perceptual field as it is being experienced by the client". For CBT, there is a certain corrective impulse laden in the theory to realign, adjust, adapt the client to a certain standard. See Carl Rogers, *Client-Centered Therapy* (Constable & Robinson, 2003), 42.

For example, it is not uncommon to find that equality is advocated for through biological, historical, anthropological or cultural precedents—vis-à-vis Weberian sociology, e.g. the Frankfurt School or David Graeber.[34] The drawbacks of these arguments is that they can be disputed with counter-precedents. While theorists of this tradition may not see history as linearly progressive, they tend to view experience as determining the Real; the experience of a form of equality is the existence of an equality. On the other hand, it is also not uncommon to advocate for equality through classical empirical argument—vis-à-vis Durkheimian sociology, i.e. technological determinism, degrowth, or 'fully automated luxury communism.' The determinism of these arguments fails to grasp the social dynamics emerging from cycles of societal reproduction (which determine history). Instead, there is a certain linearity in their historical approach which cannot be substantiated and often resembles Messianic and redemptive thinking.

There are well-intentioned motives to avoiding the question of 'what is the nature of man?' The most serious of these is a critique of the naturalisation of man's nature. A critique I am sympathetic to, as these debates draw from the philosophic history of such things as Paine's *Rights of Man*, Rousseau's *Social Contract*, or Mazzini's *Duties of Man* that tend to be value-laden, morally utilitarian, philosophically idealist and historiographically linear. Another reservation to the question of the nature of man is the naturalisation of typicality, destiny, or exclusionary politics based on essentialist claims.

The claim of the nature of man I will advance in praxis psychotherapy should be seen as a continuation of Roy Bhaskar's critical realism. But before doing so, the methodological question needs to be addressed.

Bhaskar, rather convincingly I believe, answers the question of 'to what extent can society be studied in the same way as nature?' with the three principles of critical realism: ontological realism, epistemological relativism, and judgemental rationalism. Ontological realism suggests the separation between ontology of society and that of man. Opposing Durkheim and Weber sociology, critical realism suggests that man re-

34 The critique notwithstanding, it is essential to note that Graeber's contribution is immensely important in combating the ideological naturalisation—that is, fetish—underpinning capitalist property relations.

produces himself within society and thus reproduces society in turn.[35] In the cycle of society and man's reproduction there will be ruptures during which society and/or man enter either a state of *emergence* from the reproductive dynamics of society or *entrenchment* into the dynamics of the set reproductivity.

Ontological realism is the claim that the existence of reality is not predicated on man's thinking or knowing. This is derived from transcendental realism, which "argues that it is necessary to assume for the intelligibility of science that the order discovered in nature exists independently of men, i.e. of human activity in general."[36] Epistemological relativism is the claim that man construes the world he lives in and that these construals are relative according to one's cosmology, culture, ideology, interest, discourse, etc. These construals are not only culturally relative, but also temporally variable—they are ever-changing and mind-dependent.[37]

Finally, judgemental rationalism holds that all knowledge is fallible; however judgements can and sometimes must be made. Unlike judgemental relativism, where all construals are tolerated, judgemental rationalism suggests that judgement can be made in consideration of the first two principles. This is where the core of psychological work should be, and based on the application of critical realism on a situation, a praxis psychotherapist would encourage emergence, and combat entrenchment.

Psychologically, I take emergence to mean a form of psychosocial revolution where man challenges the set reproduction of the self and

35 In relation to the society-man connection, Bhaskar writes: "people do not create society. For it always pre-exists them and is a necessary condition for their activity. Rather, society must be regarded as an ensemble of structures, practices and conventions which individuals reproduce or transform, but which would not exist unless they did so. Society does not exist independently of human activity (the error of reification) [Durkheimian]. But it is not the product of it [Weberian]. Now the process whereby the stocks of skills, competences and habits appropriate to given social context, and necessary for the reproduction and/or transformation of society, are acquired and maintained could be generically referred to as *socialisation*. It is important to stress that the reproduction and/or transformation of society, though for the most part unconsciously achieved, is nevertheless still an *achievement*, a skilled accomplishment of active subjects, not a mechanical consequence of antecedent conditions." See Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 36.

36 Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science* (Verso, 2008) 27.

37 David Pilgrim, *Critical Realism for Psychologists* (Routledge, 2019), 3-4.

thus society at points of ruptures. Emergence is what a psychotherapist should inspire in patients and is dependent on the reality and history of the client. There are *grand ruptures* within a certain reality and history for clients to emerge, such as the Sudanese revolution. However, with the help of the client, a praxis therapist can tease out these ruptures in the monotony of everyday psychic life.

What follows this chapter are case studies of this process. The nature of man is a drive to transcend. In man's reproduction of the self, and in turn reproducing a pre-existing society, there is the impulse to transcend.

Personal and Social Rupture

From the moment the revolutionaries decided to commit and execute change in the Sudanese revolution of 2018–19, the reasons for which were many and historical, with the two primary conditions for the revolution being the decaying economic and social situation. Simply, there was a break with the set reproduction of society; the normal was collectively challenged. *A grand rupture*. On the one hand, this exploded the likelihood of different potentials: emergence; and on the other hand, bureaucrats, professionals and those who organised under the now-fallen regime entered a state of erratic containment: entrenchment. During this period, the latter group created unlikely coalitions to contain the potential of the former. In this rupture, people's contradictions became more profound, the emergent group tried to force history forward whereas the entrenchment group tried to freeze it in place.

Perhaps one incident that best highlighted the intensity of the moment's contradiction, for me, was speaking to a protestor during a sit-in. The doctor exclaimed, self-righteously and indignantly, that she was doing "real revolutionary work," unlike those rough sleepers who had no choice but to sleep on the street. "They're lucky that so many of us can feed them, educate them, and house them in the sit-in for free!" This doctor was bound for Europe some months later. In this precarious revolutionary moment, her expressions were contradictory.

For the doctor, her animus towards the poor reflected an erratic urge to return to a past normal. A past normal where different social dynamics

reproduced reality to her favour; dynamics that conspired to maintain her privilege, in doing so, maintaining a strict class divide. However, in a revolutionary moment, she would try to recreate the conspiracy solely, without the past social elements. Her erraticism manifests in the insistence of a past reality that is incompatible with the current moment. She would, nonetheless, join a coalition with others in similar positions to violently and artificially recreate that previous normal—usually in institutions that have withstood the test of revolution and remain ontologically motionless, e.g. the UN.

Parts I and III of these reflections acknowledge the history of Sudan with some intimacy. For this part, however, it will suffice to present a general history of Sudan. The revolution of 2018–19 was not born in a vacuum; rather, it is a continuation of an *irrational revolution* most profoundly articulated in 1924.

An irrational revolution is a state of contradiction and violence that animates a population coming into contact with accumulation by dispossession and its logic. When capitalist property relations come into contact with non-capitalist property relations, retaliation from these populations is an irrational one—either in the form of combating the ideological naturalisation of capitalism (political rationalism), or adopting them and engendering their contradiction that manifests psychosocially.

In both minute and profound ways, societies resist what Max Weber refers to as rationalisation:

> the rationalisation of the state in bureaucratic organisation, the rationalisation of the economy in industrial capitalism, the decline of superstition, and the progress of science and technology [...] an obsession with rational planning, a fondness for 'totalising' views of the world, the standardisation of knowledge, universalism (a belief in universal truths and values), and a belief in linear progress, especially of reason and freedom.[38]

Beyond this, there are other naturalised ideological claims that are violently advanced by advocates of the state (as we will later see).

Capitalist dynamics here is defined as the subversion of pre-existing property relations to those as defined by John Locke. Even when those

38 Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism*, 182.

property relations are allowed to continue, they do so only as utility forms—serving to maintain and expand a capitalist property logic, not to uphold non-capitalist alternatives.[39] The reason for the irrational revolution label is because, while the ideological claims of capitalist property regimes are rationalist, the dynamics that uphold these property relations are irrational and contradictory. This irrationality drives the reproduction of capitalism. In this sense, the ideological underpinnings of capitalist property relations need to be reinforced—violently and complexly. Though these ideologies exist in idea-form, they have a profound psychological effect.

This statement is not meant to pathologise or essentialise. Nor is it a political-economic critique. Rather, what I will now attempt to do is articulate psychological exploitation under capitalist property relations that influence our current forms of production and reproduction. In this spirit, an observation of a general history of Sudan will allow us to circumvent the long history of modern Sudan, which I will tackle elsewhere.

During an irrational revolution, conceptions of 'waste' and 'improvement' enter into a dialectic that shapes capitalist society. These conceptions are rarely driven by collective consent, but rather by the set reproductivity of society. However, moments of collective consent can manifest in a grand ruptures—such as that of the revolution of 2018–19.

Sudan has been in a state of schism caused by this dialectic since the defeat of the Mahdist Caliphate of 1898, where the Mahdists were defeated by the Anglo-Egyptian army. The age of British colonialism commenced, marking Sudan's formal entry into an epoch of irrational revolution. This was the context and drive that forged nationalism and created professionally codified parties with sectarian histories. Those sectarian parties, where once they were anti-colonial, through competing conceptions of waste and improvement remoulded their identity to engender antithetical positions, compatible with capitalist property relations.

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39 Referring to John Locke's understanding of property relations: "the Grass my Horse has bit; the Turfs my Servants has cut; and the Ore I have digg'd in any place where I have a right to them in common with others, become my *Property*..."—See John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (The Project Gutenberg, 2012), 12. In addition, the property relations that are advanced by Locke include a conception of waste, which is essential for this theory of property relations.

This broad, abstract context is important to cohere the psychological presentation of certain clients. The reality people inhabit determines the limits of their psychological emergence. The expansion of those limits depend on emergence to reproduce new forms of society.

The uprising of 1924 was the most profound articulation of an irrational revolution. The revolution of 2018–19 was another in the continuum of the irrational revolution. And while it was motivated by collective consent initially, motionless actors—such as the UN and international financial institutions—were hyper-present and related positively to organisations cultivated under the fallen regime. Similar to the above-mentioned doctor, when the potential for a different formation of society forces itself into reality, the anxiety of those who have reproduced themselves and their privilege through historic forms of reproduction, articulated by the fallen regime, intensifies.

The Economical and Psychological

In October of 1993, the reactionary Hasan al-Turabi wrote in a newspaper: "Sudan with its Islamic power was able to liberalise its economy from everything by having a free market."[40] He was also the architect of the coup that brought about the 30-year-old dictatorship. During these 30 years, the financialisation that was introduced by Nimeiry intensified. Beyond emboldening the reactionary Islamists, it also intensified land privatisation and increased the role of the private sector. This meant farmers were urbanised and categorised as 'unskilled' or 'low-skilled.' Agricultural projects that were once state-managed were deregulated, causing issues such as the clogging of canals, lower wages for government workers, and encouraged raw material exportation, as well as allowing private foreign investment to land-grab large agricultural—and infrastructural—operations.

The economy was organised to favour franchise importing and raw material exporting capitalists. This concoction created a situation where

40 Francesco Bicciato and Pierpaolo Faggi, "Gezira Scheme between State and Market: Some Remarks on the Privatization of Irrigation in Sudan," *GeoJournal*, 1995, 103.

many people were forced to work in petty commerce and trade. Others turned to the Gulf where the Kafala migration laws systematised their alienation, transforming them into slaves.

HM (patients mentioned in this reflection are all anonymised) was a member of the previously landed gentry; his family gained prominence during the Mahdist rule of 1881-1898. The family capitalised on this prominence to procure large swathes of land and used their privileged social position to enter franchise importing and raw material exporting enterprises. Though initially they were successful, their gains were dwindling due the historic context of their time—and what they perceived to be unsuccessful competition based on different conceptions of waste and improvement through power relations.

Not unlike his predecessors and successors, Nimeiry's government was combative towards the poor in the periphery, whose land (as mentioned) was privatised along conceptions of improvement. These populations did not live in a primitive utopia before Nimeiry, as some may romanticise, but were under the exploitation of the landed gentry—who occupied their privileged position due to the colonial formation introduced by the British, such as indirect rule and native administration.

The reason why the landed gentry are able to exploit the farming poor is not because there is a comfortable relationship between the gentry and the lumpen-proletariat that challenges class analysis, as some theorists may believe. It is because the farming poor have been disenfranchised by the condominium liberals, who categorise them as counter-revolutionaries and superstitious, standing in the way of modernisation. The privatisation of their commons through foreign direct investment by Nimeiry's government disenfranchised them in the name of modernisation—and the reactionary Islamists' continuation of the financialisation agenda furthered this disenfranchisement.

These practices continued the expropriation of farming lands and exploitation of farming communities. The state passed policies to ensure the expropriation of land, including deregulation and investment-friendly laws. A conscious decision was made to prioritise one form of 'improvement' over an already existing property relation.

There was a moment of eclipse when the farming classes acquiesced to the ideas that suited the interests of the gentry. This was not due to a

lack of 'consciousness,' but because the colonial formation that favoured the gentry was less exploitative than improvement through modernisation. Sectarianism was then co-opted as an ideological resistance to modernisation.

Nimeiry could then destroy these populations by using the excuse that they were pre-modern, regressive, and standing in the way of modernisation—conflating the colonial-sectarian formation with the farming labour force. Destroying the poor, unironically, under the rubric of nationalism and socialism. Such is not too dissimilar to the rhetoric being spewed by green capitalism in South America where the Indigenous population are blamed for halting the green energy transition because they are protesting against the destruction of their land and extraction of elements essential to green modernity. For Nimeiry, this culminated in the brutal Aba Island massacre of 1970. This meant that the labour force that HM's family exploited for wealth and privilege were targeted in the name of modernisation.

For HM's family, the times when they were economically successful were times when power relations were competed for more exploitatively, in favourable historic contexts. It became common practice in the family to internalise misogyny and project paternity, even subverting pre-existing traditions to limit the expressions of emotional labour to subservience and spectatorship. The material foundations of these ideologies are the preferential treatment and managerial allocation of those committed to sectarian zealotry.

Misogyny within the gentry—and particularly in HM's family—encouraged males to view themselves as more deserving, justifying their paternalistic violence towards others, particularly the poor, to insist violently on favourable conceptions of ownership.

Typically, male elite sectarians are treated as potential patriarchs, and as such, their expressions are endowed with unparalleled seriousness. A man's tears are worth moving mountains for. From the potential patriarch's perspective, the 'great man of history' attitude prevails; if he is unsuccessful, the pessimism of annihilation prevails. If he succeeds, he is encouraged to act with impunity as his autonomy becomes the conduit for history and justified by a perceived wide sectarian following. This can be observed in the case of HM.

HM was a member of the revolutionaries who sought counsel after experiencing extreme apathy and became a social recluse in the aftermath of the Khartoum massacre on 3 June 2019. When asked why he was in despair, he would answer with: "There's no point in all of this;" "Sudan needs to be torched completely and a new country needs to be built in its place;" "There's no dignity in living here;" "anyone would be lucky to leave this place," he expressed clear nihilistic and reactionary views. His statements are typical of the pessimism of annihilation, this is because he has been socialised to believe in the paramountcy of himself, which had been incubated in ideologies that relate to a grand will.

Whenever I suggestively challenged his views, his indignation would be redirected to a vague totality—replying that whoever occupies high office will surely fumble 'our' efforts. When pushed to separate *our* efforts and to address his positioning and autonomy, he replied: "What can *anyone* do? There's nothing to be done, even organising has been crippled, or penetrated by nefarious elements." Again, HM seemed to equate his great sense of loss to the terminal stage of historic potential—even the nation itself.

We worked on trying to separate autonomy from the collective will. Encouraged by the thought of conflating the death of his patriarchy to a terminal stage of history, I urged HM to diffuse his ego along religious egalitarian lines; *everyone is equal in the eyes of God*. The ideologies that formed the picture of himself were religious and thus rationalised through a religious cosmology that tried to commit to deontological claims of morality, i.e. egalitarianism through the subservience of all to Allah is a powerful motive to combat the ideologies he has naturalised.

At this historic revolutionary moment—when the ebb and flow of power dynamics are challenged with collective consent—it was also important to diffuse his understanding of property relations and concept of ownership by encouraging a certain interpretation of politics in Islam. That everything belongs to God, and thus no one has the right to 'own' something, as defined under capitalist property relations along Lockean lines. Meaning, a utilitarian conception of improvement is an attempt at controlling reality, and knowing the greater good thus knowing the future. Which is a form of polytheism, as no one but God can know the

future, which is not permitted in Islam. Ideas he was open to, when the emergence from his nihilism was addressed.

HM's disposition is emblematic of a certain class of elites who joined the revolution. There is an absurdity in their disposition when trying to merge their class position with the moment of grand rupture. In HM's thinking, *his* involvement in the revolution is a consequently historic one. The absurdity is that the internalised misogyny of his caregivers manifests in moments of revolution as a great man of history; failure is equivalent to the death of the great project and his identity as a patriarch. This is a Weberian internalisation of the theoretical collapse of the concept of society into the concept of the self.

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As mentioned, financialisation and privatisation also produced many 'low-skilled' and 'unskilled' labourers/farmers. While HM's class were the beneficiaries of this economic dynamic, **FT**'s class was not.

FT is from the class that was dispossessed due to the dynamics privileging HM's class. Her family were farmers and petty traders from the mid-west of Sudan. Land reform dispossessed them and classified them as low-skilled workers. Many in her class migrated to urban centers where they entered the gig economy. Others, including herself and her immediate family, immigrated to Saudi Arabia.

The Global South immigrants to Gulf countries are relegated to second-class citizens under the Kafala system—a two-tiered system that maintains Gulf Arab supremacy. In Saudi Arabia, economic migrants, specifically those from the Global South, require the sponsorship of a Saudi citizen to enter and leave the country and to work. They are not permitted to leave their jobs without the approval of their sponsor; most are required to hand over their travel documents to their Saudi guardians. In Saudi Arabia, the state is not a conduit that expresses and protects the rights and will of all people, but rather one that enforces the stratification of society and citizenry along absolute sovereignty and racialised lines, leaving immigrants from the Global South at the mercy of their employer-sponsor-sovereigns, who are emboldened by the state.

There is the added exploitative element for some domestic labourers, where even travel is restricted and granted by the employer-sponsor-sovereign. All this forces the creation of a deeply bureaucratic and heavily surveilled society for the immigrant labour army. Behind the bureaucracy lies a criminalised subterranean class of workers.

Because the state is the conduit of the two-tiered system and not for the right of man, this means that what may be considered the liberal rights of man, such as property ownership, plurality of opinion, freedom of expression, right to self-determination, equal persecution and representation under the law, are not inherent but are competed for based on the whims of the sovereign-sponsor. These whims are shaped by the economic situation and arbitrary conception of virtue—virtue being mostly determined by nationality and cultural bias, influenced by how lax a country is about the exploitation of its citizens abroad, thereby facilitating labour abuse.

Meanwhile, the immigrant labour army must report their stay, sponsorship and employment status, otherwise they could be denied basic services such as banking or home internet or healthcare. Under commercial absolutism, when one does not have access to basic services, their means of subsistence can be jeopardised—many have to exist in the subterranean networks, i.e. becoming racialised and criminalised. It was important to understand and explore these details with FT as it relates to the social reality she was reproduced under.

In this reality, exploitation of all natures prevails, especially prevalent in the domestic labour force. Remittances sent back from Filipino domestic immigrant labourers working in Saudi Arabia, for example, helps the labourer's family and thus individualises responsibility, concentrates wealth and promotes paternalistic dependency on the sender. In many cases, to put it differently, remittance is a way home governments abdicate their role in building welfare programmes to immigrant labourers sending monies back to their in-need families. This disincentivises addressing abusive practices in Gulf countries by countries who export immigrant labourers. At the time of writing this piece, there are no concrete statistics on the exploitation of domestic workers in Saudi Arabia or the Gulf region that I could find, which I believe could be one of the most exploitative situations for women worldwide.

Angela Davis' comments on sexual violence in slave society do well to help one understand the conditions of domestic labourers in Saudi Arabia: "It is important to remember that the punishment inflicted on women exceeded in intensity the punishment suffered by their men, for women were not only whipped and mutilated, they were *raped* ... Rape was a weapon of domination, a weapon of repression, whose covert goal was to extinguish the slave woman's will to resist, and in the process, to demoralise their men."[41]

FT's family migrated to Saudi Arabia from Sudan following their dispossession caused by land reform. She was the youngest of three, and the only daughter. At age 10, she was raped by one of her brothers. One of the important parts of psychotherapy is the aetiology of traumatic phenomena, which is a complicated psychological procedure. The brother who sexually assaulted FT was prone to fits of rage. Contextualising this rage with FT, we analysed the behaviour as *violence of aspiration*,[42] and not *sexual desire*. A reality in which one is born into dispossession, communicates under the constraints of a surveilled state, and is encouraged to reproduce the self within an apparently arbitrary and stratified society—thereby perpetuating that very society through exploitation and subtle forms of violence—is one that can be interpreted through a single analytical lens: methodological individualism.[43]

FT is a lesbian. She sought counsel to analyse her obsession with her unofficial partner and self-harm. FT displayed a sombre disposition

41 Angela Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, (Penguin Random House, 1981), 12–20.

42 The term 'aspiration' here refers to elite class aspiration and not aspiration as a 'psychological trait'.

43 There is a politically right-ward bias in psychological research that suggests people who experience violence tend to be violent. This is sometimes translated into xenophobia against refugees fleeing war. The basic argument of this claim is correct, that violence begets violence, however the racial violence of being dispossessed from belonging is never mentioned. This supreme form of violence is usually found in 'safe' countries, such as Gulf countries and Western Europe. This violence is scantily mentioned; sometimes when it is mentioned, it is done so in the form of an imperial boomerang wherein, contrary to decolonial theories, racism in Europe did not appear in the interaction between the coloniser and colonised. Today, by and large these 'safe' countries do not have birthright citizenship, and those that do are slowly eroding this basic right in favour of 'blood'-nativist belonging.

from the very first session. As our sessions began to explore the more intimate details of her life, FT's seriousness was unmasked to reveal a certain infantilised obsession with her partner, who did not reciprocate FT's feelings.

Infantilisation is a presentation found in those who have been dispossessed of curiosity at developmental stages in childhood that lays the foundation for socialisation in the form of diffusing the ego. Fundamentally, infantilisation can be a form of rebellion against the linearity of psychosocial development. It is a form of protest to insist that one's childhood was not dispossessed.

Her obsession was a protest against the dispossession of her curiosity—the sexual assault—by her brother, and another traumatic event that had occured: her mother had had an affair during their stay in Saudi Arabia. At a young age, FT would be forced to accompany her mother on these romantic rendezvous, where she was sworn to secrecy and was made an 'accomplice' to her mother's infidelity. This also contributed to the theft of her curiosity.

The infantile obsession with a partner who did not reciprocate the same feelings was an impossible situation that FT crafted to artificially recreate the moment of infidelity that she was 'accomplice' to. Being sworn to secrecy, her autonomy was frozen and identity crystalised, and through her artificially recreated infidelity, FT tried to force an antithetical identity within the same crystalisation, playing the part of the 'adulteress'; she and her partner became involved while her partner was already committed to another.

It was the dispossession of the farming class and the maintenance of dominance through stratified *citizen-isation* that led FT and her family to exist in a particular panoptical exploitation.[44] For her mother, resistance

44 States produce different civilian categories to maintain material and ideological hegemony over belonging. The refugees in Germany, for example, cannot participate in their own reproduction (due to being barred from working), and are used as a scapegoat to embolden nationalism and undermine labour conditions. Nationalism here acts as a panopticon, where second class citizens are monitored according to arbitrary conceptions of belonging, which is ubiquitous. Saudi Arabia uses the Kafala system to dispossess workers of rights to protests or liberal right to ownership, creating massive amounts of wealth through dispossessing immigrants of their belongings, labour and common ownership; it also promotes panopticon-level surveillance through national-

to a pre-existent society with a seemingly arbitrary state surveillance (a panopticon), could be in the form of the rendezvous that existed outside the petite panopticon of marriage and the paternalistism underpinning it. For her mother, these encounters were individualised and momentary escapes from surveillance, without veering too far into the subterranean levels.

It is worth noting a concept of sovereignty, as defined by Graeber and Wengrow, relating to state-formation, which is the moral and social exceptionalism of the sovereign in relation to the common.[45] In a state where moral and social exceptionalism is stratified and absolute, through citizen and nationality categories, a conservative way to challenge this status is to enact sovereignty at home, in the form of sexual violence, as a means of asserting one's aspiration to become a sovereign rather than remain a subject. Aspirational sovereigns, being untethered from moral or social relations, act with impunity and demonstrate their petite sovereignty by breaking moral and social norms within the home, which becomes a microcosm of the state. This makes incest one of the more profound demonstrations of sovereignty, especially in a panoptical state, where the perpetrator reproduces omniscience and forces the victim to exist only as an instrument for actualising their sovereignty. Similarly, migrant labour in the Gulf exists to actualise Gulf modernity.

The brother who sexually assaulted FT was such a petit sovereign. More to the point, the brother chose, as a reaction to the exploitative situation in which they were reproduced, to aspire to become a sovereign at home, instead of joining the criminalised and racialised subterraneans.

It was also the same brother who took part in the Sudanese revolution, defying his parents' instructions not to. FT mentioned that he discouraged her from joining the revolution in a paternalistic manner, supposedly to protect her—once again asserting his petit sovereignty. Even at a moment of grand rupture, paternalism persisted.

Every moment of contradiction is a potential rupture—and a po-

ism. Panopticon as nationalism means that citizens who belong are elevated to perform the role of prison guards, and are incentivised to act as such.

45 David Graeber and David Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* (Penguin UK, 2021), 398.

tential opening for emergence or entrenchment—from the typical reproduction of the self within society. For FT, as for many of my clients, we explored these moments of contradictions in depth. Those moments of contradiction that reoccur offer rich insights.

For FT, the contradiction emerged in her obsession with a partner who did not reciprocate her strong feelings. In exploring these contradictions, FT and I were able to articulate her epistemologies and unintended reproduction of the self and her social role more clearly. Her unexpressed sense of indignation and her normalised, clandestine suffering motivated a process of self-reproduction in a certain crystalised form.

Through our sessions, FT was encouraged to have fleeting sexual experiences with other women, to detach from the unrequited relationship; to explore the relationship between sex and the limited and clandestine expression she's forced to operate while being surveilled and used to maintain another's petit sovereignty; to reproduce herself momentarily through a form that challenges the ideological naturalisation that informed her relations. These fleeting experiences were meant to view sex as desire, and not a tool for continued objectification, even if this was arousing. These fleeting experiences challenged her obsession, and the crystallized image of herself. This challenge extended beyond the self to pre-existing dynamics.

Like FT, many were forced to immigrate to Saudi Arabia because of the policies of the Nimeiry regime, which were intensified by the dictatorship of al-Bashir and al-Turabi. These regimes expanded the free market and relegated many farmers to 'low-skilled' labour, leaving them little recourse beyond working as modern-day slaves in Saudi Arabia. Many of those who sought counsel from me who existed in the Gulf territories wanted to explore their clandestine sexual lives.

Reproducing the self by mimicking arbitrary absolute sovereignty within a surveillance society increases the potential for clandestine sexual exploitation to reproduce that same arbitrary sovereignty—experienced by many in the Gulf and Western developed countries—at home, as a means to express the antithesis of slave; sovereign. Both slave and sovereign do not possess moral autonomy; the former is dispossessed from it, the latter unbounded by it. This is not the practice of all who fit the description, but the ideologies that inform the reality in the Gulf region incubate ideas and practices that are shaped by this particular form of

capitalist exploitation. It is also not arbitrary that sovereign (elite class) aspiration can be closely linked to incest.

The surveillance and exploitation of the poor in the Gulf countries exist to create towering structures for elites to dwell and use as examples of how deregulation can turn desert to oasis—thanks to the gift of oil, supposedly—and how structures founded on exploitation and constant surveillance, ensure competing ideologies and practices do not take root.

Many may believe, for better or worse, that this means there will not be any significant socialist political parties within the Gulf political system as it stands. In fact, the outcomes of this surveillance and exploitation are much worse.

These case studies demonstrate the psychological exploitation of people within a class. They show the extent of exploitation as an alive phenomenon and not a dead one—ongoing, not merely a structural abstraction or a deterministic claim as seen in discourse theory or classical empiricism.

The Industrious Spirit, Dispossession and Sovereignty

Taken seriously, Locke's definition of property relations helps us understand sovereignty under capitalism—even if his definition is ideological. For Locke, in order to establish capitalist property relations, one needs to be endowed with an industrious spirit; to 'improve' the common property to a certain standard so as not to 'waste' the land.[46] Claims about an industrious spirit are often associated with colonial, elite, and racist attitudes.

As for those 'unendowed' with an industrious spirit, their experience of capitalist property relations are informed by the power wielded by the endowed. Under capitalist regimes, the unendowed are often dispossessed of their social ties and alienated through the ongoing process of capitalist accumulation. When constant dispossession by accumulation

46 Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, 14.

occurs, social ties dissipate.[47] Those unendowed find themselves constantly in a precarious situation, they experience "insecurity (of position, entitlements and livelihood), of uncertainty (as to their continuation and future stability) and of unsafety (of one's body, one's self and their extensions: possessions, neighbourhood, community)."[48] Those unendowed with an industrious spirit, or a sense of sovereignty over the commons, are left alienated and reduced to objects.

Those souls theoretically belong to the slave category, in the sense that they are constantly dispossessed of belonging and social ties. With no social ties, people are a potential horse, computer chip, or brick in a wall; a tool for those endowed with an industrious spirit to 'improve' property with, and their belonging determined based on their utility.

Seen in this light, the ideological underpinning of most psychotherapy that is not anti-capitalist is either the normalisation of the metamorphosis of man into horse—behaviourism; or a momentary fabricated delusion of being endowed with an industrious spirit—humanism.

Not unlike the king's claim to sovereignty, the capitalist's claim to sovereignty is substantiated by ideology (superstition) and violence (the threat thereof). When this sovereignty is challenged, violence intensifies—entrenchment. During the Sudanese revolution, a similar state of fear gripped those endowed, extreme ideologies of violence, which were deployed against the revolutionaries.

Immediately after the 3 June 2019 massacre in Khartoum, both public and private transport were restricted from entering certain areas of the city. The streets were emptied and patrolled by the paramilitary and the police. In handfuls, we, the revolutionaries, maneuvered our way to Burri stealthily. We travelled in small groups of three, to avoid suspicion. The paramilitary and police used the same technique; moving in groups. Burri, a neighbourhood in the north of the city, was one of the main hubs for revolutionary activity in Khartoum where we all congregated, fending off attempts by the paramilitary to penetrate the neighbourhood.

47 As David Harvey notes, while Rosa Luxemburg theorised that primitive accumulation occurs in places where capitalism comes in contact with periphery regions, today, dispossession seems to occur in core capitalist regions. See David Harvey, *A Companion to Marx's Capital: The Complete Edition* (Verso Books, 2018), 312.

48 Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 161.

We managed to secure petrol from parked cars to make Molotov cocktails. There was no real concentrated effort by the paramilitary to penetrate Burri, however a few rogues tried. They were met with explosive cocktails. Once Burri was secure, I made my way back home. On the way back, I noticed a lone police officer. Though the police's roles were different from that of the paramilitary, they maintained the status quo during times of relative stability, while the paramilitary were more violent. However, at that moment, these distinctions were pedantic. I ambushed the officer but quickly learnt he was not alone. Another officer stepped out of a nearby car with a Kalashnikov. That night, I was sent to a holding cell, and luckily not to one of the many 'ghost houses,' the notorious undisclosed torture locations.[49]

I've come to find out that the cell was a limbo place for the dispossessed. All my cell mates were not aware of the massacre that had just taken place. Some had only heard about the revolution but did not witness it. Then there was **EJ**, an Ethiopian man who did not speak Arabic, and only some English. Locked inside, a discussion erupted about the revolution. Pessimism about the state of Sudan was palpable, though I spoke optimistically about the history of the country. At one point, even the guards joined in on the conversation.

A cell mate and I exchanged contact details to get involved once outside. Such was important revolutionary work. The criminalised class represented some of the most revolutionary members of society. For some, it was surprising that someone living in Britain would return to join a revolution. With Sudan being a former colony, Britain was considered an Eden on Earth. I believe this fact was more convincing of communism than debating Sudanese history.

In the midst of a heated discussion, EJ, who had kept to himself in the corner, became more attentive. I asked him what he thought about all this. We communicated in English. He told me that he had been in the cell for two months and that the officers, in one of their raids (*kasha*) of an 'illegal' shisha bar, snatched him and placed him in the holding cell indefinitely. He told me that he was planning to go to Libya, and from there try to make the dangerous journey to Italy; *Sumbuk*, as it is referred

49 Refugee Council, "Sudan: Khartoum 'Safe as Ghost Houses' for Asylum Seekers Facing Removal," *ReliefWeb*, 2006.

to in Sudan. He was placed in the holding cell because mid-level officers used people like him to blackmail their family back in Ethiopia for a ransom. EJ's ransom was $1,000.[50]

For EJ, his dire situation was founded on the dispossession of his belonging and being differently citizen-ised, i.e. racialised. For him, the agents of violence, the mid-level officers, were justified in their actions and even encouraged to be more draconian by the state security apparatus receiving financial aid from the EU to militarize the European borders which reverberates all the way to North Africa. The EU has been funding initiatives that violently crack-down on any attempts to migrate to Europe from Africa, and so the military apparatus of the country has become more xenophobic in their disposition due to financial incentives to quash attempts by migrants to enter Europe. This seeped into the social attitudes. With no clear aim to mitigate that common practice of searching for a better opportunity elsewhere, the Sub-Saharan poor were fair game. In fact, the rhetoric of border security in Europe not only emboldens nativism and racism *within* Europe, but has a rippling effect of racialisation across the world. The officers in Sudan racially and systematically target Ethiopians and other racialised people in shanty shisha bars and other working class and peasant establishments, incentivised by the border logic of the European fortress.

Beyond this, there is the immediate logistical issue of food, water and shelter, which was costly for the officers. To expedite EJ's ransom money, they need to show his family that he is in a desperate situation, thus his treatment deteriorated and food was scarce.

EJ was, in essence, a person who was stripped of any kind of existence. He was dispossessed from his autonomy. He could not establish

50 There is a common political narrative in Europe that defends tackling 'illegal' migration from Africa on the basis of it being dangerous for the immigrant as the process requires empowering predatory 'gangs' and their practices. This discourse holds exactly zero weight when contrasting it with reality; it was the EU that financed governments in Africa and incentivised these gangs to further disenfranchise migrants. Much of the time, the line between the government agents and the gangs is blurry. The RSF paramilitary group secured funds from Europe to stop migration from Sudan even after they were accused of committing the 21st century's first genocide. Mid-level officers within the RSF could secure passage to Libya. In addition, those criminalised in Europe, in particular in Greece, for smuggling are themselves immigrants. Their only crime is steering a boat to safety.

social ties because of the transitory nature of the holding cell; most people stayed less than a month. He did not speak the language, which added a further complication to establishing social ties. In addition, the only constant there, the police officers, were incentivised to starve him.

EJ's reality is one that is replicated, with varying degrees of severity, in order to dispossess people of their ownership of labour or common ownership of land and belonging. The dispossession of citizenship and belonging is one of the more institutionalised ways of dispossession. The abovementioned Kafala system is one example, and Germany's (among other European countries') attitudes to refugees are theoretically similar to the situation of EJ. The dispossessed in Germany are "the so-called 'guest workers,' who are underscored as having played a crucial role in Germany's spectacular social and economic ascent that was possible for the majority of working people at this time. This ascent ultimately rested in large part on an 'underclass' of migrant workers who had been brought to Germany for repetitive and dirty work in a prospering industry, and then later, once the long economic boom was over, were coolly sent back home."[51]

This dispossession of belonging, like other forms of dispossession, is usually intensified during times where the sovereignty of capitalists are challenged. The ideological and violent expression of these dispossessions are intertwined. A common example is the ideological 'othering' to justify violence or retracement of civil liberties. When someone is dispossessed of belonging, they are thus at the whims of arbitrary violence. EJ's reality was justified because he did not belong in any formal or informal way to the social context. He was abstract. His metamorphosis into a horse was complete, and he could now be traded for $1,000 with impunity. Here, I refer to the horse in the previously quoted passage from Locke: "the Grass my Horse has bit; the Turfs my Servants has cut; and the Ore I have digg'd in any place where I have a right to them in common with others, become my *Property*..."[52]

51 Oliver Nachtwey, *Germany's Hidden Crisis: Social Decline in the Heart of Europe* (Verso Books, 2018), 29-30.

52 Locke, *Second Treatise of Government,* 12.

The Violence of Sodomy

After the fall of al-Bashir in 2019, the challenge to capitalist sovereignty was severe, and the reaction was extreme. There was an ideological motive by many to demonise the revolution. Motionless NGOs entered into discussions with the paramilitary and military instead of the revolutionaries.[53] Theological arguments against revolution emerged from Salafist circles ('do not raise up against your ruler,' etc.). The revolutionaries were labeled as being chaotic, immoral, and incoherent.

The most potent ideological resistance came from the security forces— the police and military— the enforcers of violence, where ideology and violence converge. They viewed the revolutionaries as agents working against the *values* of the nation. To them, revolutionaries were against nationalism, values, and *asabiyyah,*[54] which animated officers' sense of duty to eradicate the threats with great prejudice, their raison d'etre being 'maintaining the peace.' Their zeal in carrying out this task was powerful, to the point where they viewed not just revolutionaries, but young condominium dwellers, as the enemy within.

While driving around one of Khartoum's affluent neighbourhoods, **TJ** was stopped by police officers wearing civilian clothes. They searched him and the car and found the ends of rolled cannabis joints. TJ was with female friends. The officers separated TJ from the women (they remained in TJ's car with two officers). The third officer took TJ to their unofficial police car. The officer threatened TJ with torture and imprisonment but

53 Exemplified by the head of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), Volker Perthes, holding negotiations with Burhan (head of the Sudanese Armed Forces), Hemedti (head of the Rapid Support Force) and various political parties. All of whom were played an active role during the dictatorship.

54 **Ed. Note:** Developed by Ibn Khaldun, *asabiyyah* refers to social cohesion and group solidarity, the binding force that enables a group to act collectively and maintain political power. Ibn Khaldun argued that strong *asabiyyah* typically emerges among kin-based or tribal groups and underpins the rise of ruling dynasties. Over time, as groups settle, accumulate wealth, and become more urbanized, this cohesion weakens, leading to decline and eventual replacement by a new group with stronger *asabiyyah*.

maintained that if he cooperated, he would not need to resort to such extremes. The officer then started touching TJ inappropriately. He drove TJ to an alleyway and raped him.

Here, a clear contradiction emerges. The women were unharmed—in fact, they were escorted to a main road to take transport back to their homes. Ideas about nationalism at the time were paternalistic: the police saw themselves as protecting the nation. This was translated in that particular moment as paternalism towards the women. On the other hand, the rape of TJ by the officer was hetro-sadist and emasculating. It was a politically motivated rape, not too dissimilar to what the Israel "Defense" Forces do to Palestinians.

Due to the moment of revolution, and the concentration of the military in urban centers, the police played a destructive and clandestine role in defending Sudanese nationalism that was seemingly being eroded from within by the revolution. The military and paramilitary held the monopoly of violence within urban centers, which was typically a role reserved for the police and secret services. That role being somewhat abdicated, the police were now untethered to their perceived role as protectors, and could now enact more violent and clandestine practices to protect the nation. The police wore civilian clothing and went on a campaign of violence. They were provided with methamphetamines and other drugs to deal to the youth, which created an epidemic of drug use in the country;[55] they used rape to spread terror;[56] among many other clandestine violent practices.

TJ did not come to see me of his volition. After the incident, he became socially isolated, started self-harming, and refused to leave his house. Concerned for his wellbeing, his friends urged him to come and see me. From the first session, TJ refused to engage. In these situations, it is sometimes helpful to speak about an indirectly related phenomena to the trauma and personalise it. I spoke about the bureaucratic procedure of obtaining a driver's licence, and how the police vindictively acted according to their own will, and how the law itself was arbitrary.

55 *Dabanga Sudan*, "Drug Abuse in Sudan: 'The Tip of the Iceberg,'" 2022.

56 Zeinab Mohammed Salih, "Protests in Sudan After Alleged Gang-Rape of Young Woman by Security Forces," *The Guardian*, 2022.

Once TJ was more verbal, we started exploring insular and interpersonal topics. He talked about how he felt about his parents and siblings in elaborate and thought out details. The interpersonal violence carried out by the police eroded any sense of security and exposed him to death anxiety, as articulated by Irvin Yalom.[57]

Yalom describes death anxiety as arising after the breakdown of two main defences. The first is the belief that one is exempt from death, that it only happens to others. The second is the collapse of a guardian angel figure.

For TJ, who was never part of the revolution and had distanced himself from any revolutionary activity, the likelihood of violence, which was clearly part of the revolutionary moment, affecting him was not considered. That was the break in the first defence against death anxiety. The second, the collapse of a guardian angel, in the form of institutional failure, marked the rupture of an ideological illusion.

The police are conscripted to fulfil the role of agents that contain the beastly instincts of man, to stop the inevitable war of all against all—a Hobbesian conception of society to justify policing. Persons who have passively not considered the nature of inequality, but have accepted what is as is take these conceptions of society as set. Institutions such as the police ensure these beliefs are imprinted on the collective psyche. In reality, the police are often ineffectual in most emergency situations.

For TJ, who has remained uncritical of the set reproductivity of society, including its inequalities, the Hobbesian conception of society was becoming disenchanting. For him, the police, who were meant to be the last guards against the beastly nature of man, had themselves become beastly. Therapeutic work was done to triangulate violence structurally, rather than accept a neoliberal social anthropology.

TJ's reclusiveness stemmed from the collapse of the guardian angel—which is the perceived institutional failure, making him more focused on endogenous and introspective thoughts and beliefs. Upon further exploration, the perception of the police as an institution originates from an understanding that 'war of all against all' is the natural state of man, unless people are disciplined in certain forms, and the police play a

57 Irvin D. Yalom, *Existential Psychotherapy* (Basic Books, 1980), 115–116.

major role in maintaining the peaceful state. His withdrawal and introspection led him to examine his relationships—and this 'nature'—more intimately.

Therapeutic work was done to address the breaks, and the illusions of police as peacekeepers. TJ became more assertive and conscientious of social reality and illusions, he became introspective about social relations. Work was also done to address his assertiveness. He also started questioning and being acutely aware of his reproduction of the self, this is the pretext of psychological emergence.

There are many anecdotes of the police using sexual violence. During the revolution, it was common for women to wear sanitary pads as a deterrent to rape. In another incident, a couple were parked somewhere dark in a neighbourhood, when police wearing civilian clothing bombarded them. The police called a truck to take them to the station for booking. During the ride to the station, a couple of the officers sexually assaulted the woman. When she called out, resisted and screamed, the officers chillingly replied: "You were just kissing your boyfriend in the car. Now that you're caught, don't act so innocent." The ideology the police have committed to institutionally does not infer autonomy to women, but rather absolute identities of Madonna or a whore.

Texture and Potential

The purpose of this reflection is to contextualise the revolution of 2018-19, and to add psychological texture to its history more broadly. Another, perhaps more significant point, is to suggest a potentially alternative practice to psychotherapy. To transform society and individuals reproducing themselves within society, praxis psychotherapy centers the concept of emergence. Though I have not presented a fully articulated modality in this reflection, I hope the brief theoretical notes and case studies in this section offer a coherent, if incomplete, articulation of the praxis psychotherapy approach.

An integral part of the therapeutic relationship is the symbiotic dynamic between myself and the client that seeks to dissolve the quid pro quo. The therapeutic relationship in praxis psychotherapy should be seen

as an exploration of the reproductive processes of the client, and therapist. As seen in the above-mentioned case studies, the therapeutic process was able to explore the relationship between individual and society, and to encourage emergence.

Though I started my work only to advise a friend's relative about certain matters relating to FEP, by the time I had to leave the country, I had worked with clients from Sweden, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, South Sudan, Germany as well as some clients who would travel over 3 hours for sessions. I believe this is testimony to the potential effectiveness, internal consistency, intellectual and revolutionary potential of praxis psychotherapy.

The process of emergence may take multiple sessions to articulate, reason and actualise, but sometimes this process can be immediately transformative. Emergence also influences the social reality of the emergent: social relations that were established along ideological cues of the established set reproductive cycles come into conflict with emergence which challenges pre-existing social relations. Conflict may also arise when emergence comes into contact with ideas of the self, history, production, efficiency, ethics, and so on.

The pace and depth of emergence depends on many psychosocial factors. Sacrificing pre-existing dynamics for an emergence based on incremental transformation—one that leads to revolt against a society built upon irrational dynamics yet claiming ideological rationalism—is ongoing and difficult. However, the nature of psychosocial exploitation under capitalism, as demonstrated in these case studies, remains a strong motivator for revolution, though not the only one.

One of the more immediately transformative experiences in a session was with a client, **LW**, who was emotionally and sexually coerced by her partner. The coercion limited the client's autonomy. She was not able to use her phone without the explicit permission of her partner. In fact, it was her partner who would drop her off at the sessions and wait outside until the sessions were over. It was a difficult relationship to maintain, not just because of the energy needed to establish power relations without the help of something like a state, but because the lesbian couple's power dynamic could not be articulated in all social spaces. It was an authoritarian relationship within a hetero-conservative social ethic.

Since the narration of the relationship between LW and her partner was compromised, we shifted to talking about her relationship with her sister. After all, in late capitalism, competition is not just between firms but between workers within firms and the labour market—intensified by the entrepreneurialisation of gig workers. In this case, as we reproduce ourselves and thus reproduce society in turn, the intensification of sibling rivalry is a powerful representation of the competition between workers. This is especially evident among the aspirational, who raise children to compete fiercely in pursuit of the myth of social mobility.

Sibling rivalry was deeply embedded in the relationship between LW and her sister. The affection of their father was made paramount and competition to capture it was established along certain standards of femininity. For LW, it was her older sister who formally established this competitive dynamic between themselves, with the clear objective to win the position of subservience to and admiration of their father. The competition was established along utilitarian lines, where anything would be utilised for that end goal or *value*. The rivalry was severe, vindictive and dangerous, and sadomasochism became the modus operandi. In trying to understand LW's dynamics of reproduction, we saw how this modus operandi related to her current relationship in her *consent of tyranny*.

It was LW's first same-sex relationship and she spoke in detail about their sexual life. It was these details that were used to compensate for the lack of freedom in her social life. The contradiction was not simply an intrapersonal one but a social one. Where she unconsciously reproduced herself through a certain standard of femininity as an object of her father's admiration, she unconsciously internalised this standard of femininity. To resist being consciously objectified, she opted to recaliberate her practices and identify with a seemingly asymmetrical standard of femininity: same-sex relations. However, resistance is not revolution, and counter to what some may believe, sexual euphoria does not liberate the self.

LW's presentation was more complicated than conforming to a certain standard of femininity. We never reproduce ourselves in exactly the same way as the previous cycle because we exist within history, the ebb and flow of class conflict. For LW, she intuited the toxicity of her relationship with her sister and father, interpersonally rather than structurally. Her resistance

to the toxic reproduction was a physicalist mirror opposite. In this sense, she viewed the anxiety from the femininity she engendered as stemming directly from a conformity to heteronormativity, which abstractly seems uncontroversial. She essentialised heteronormativity along biologised gendered categories, reproducing herself along the same heteronormative paradigms, but engendering a different sexual identity. When we came to this conclusion through exploration, it was a powerful therapeutic moment.

Upon this revelation, the client began shaking erratically. In a moment of clarity, LW declared: "I'm not even a lesbian!" It is not by virtue of someone's sexual identity that they are liberated or emergent from the exploitation of the cycle of reproduction. In the case of LW, certainly her being a lesbian did not liberate her from the incubated sibling rivalry, under the regime of horizontal competition, that is personally laden with paranoia and structurally heteronormative. This realisation was a moment of vivid awareness of the contradiction.

Different sexual (or otherwise) identities do not imminently guarantee liberation from patriarchy or misogyny (or other forms of exploitation). However, certain identities in certain contexts may put exploitation into sharper focus but do not determine emergence, e.g. being Black in America, Darfuri in Sudan, a Muslim in Germany. These are not universalised identity experiences. Consider the example of reactionary queer Muslims in Germany: while they may have a history of persecution, their narratives can be privileged within European state discourse to justify the genocide of Palestinians.

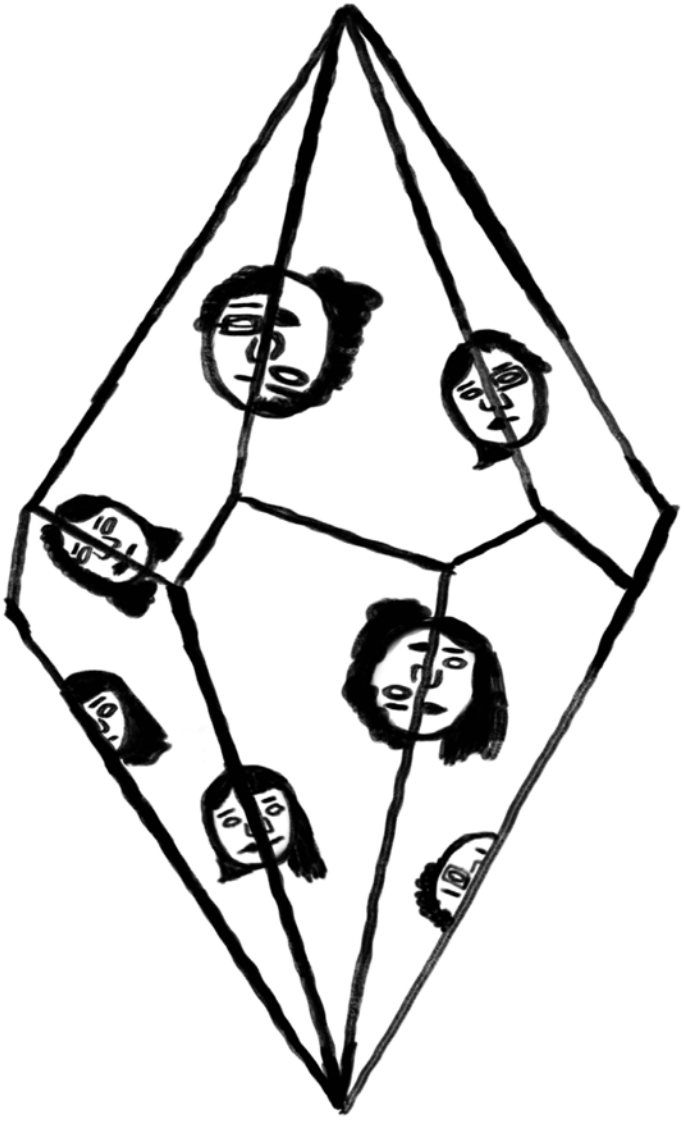
This case study can be abstracted to offer an intimate understanding of the social and psychological world we inhabit under late capitalism. LW took her sexual identity to be subversive and even a form of revolt against the established norms of reproduction, which included standards of femininity. Emergence is not about identifying with the asymmetrical aesthetic of an established ideology of reproductivity; it is a structural reshaping of how to reproduce the self and society based on freedom, which are built atop the historic position in which the self and society find themselves.

After that transformative session, LW's partner chased me with her car.

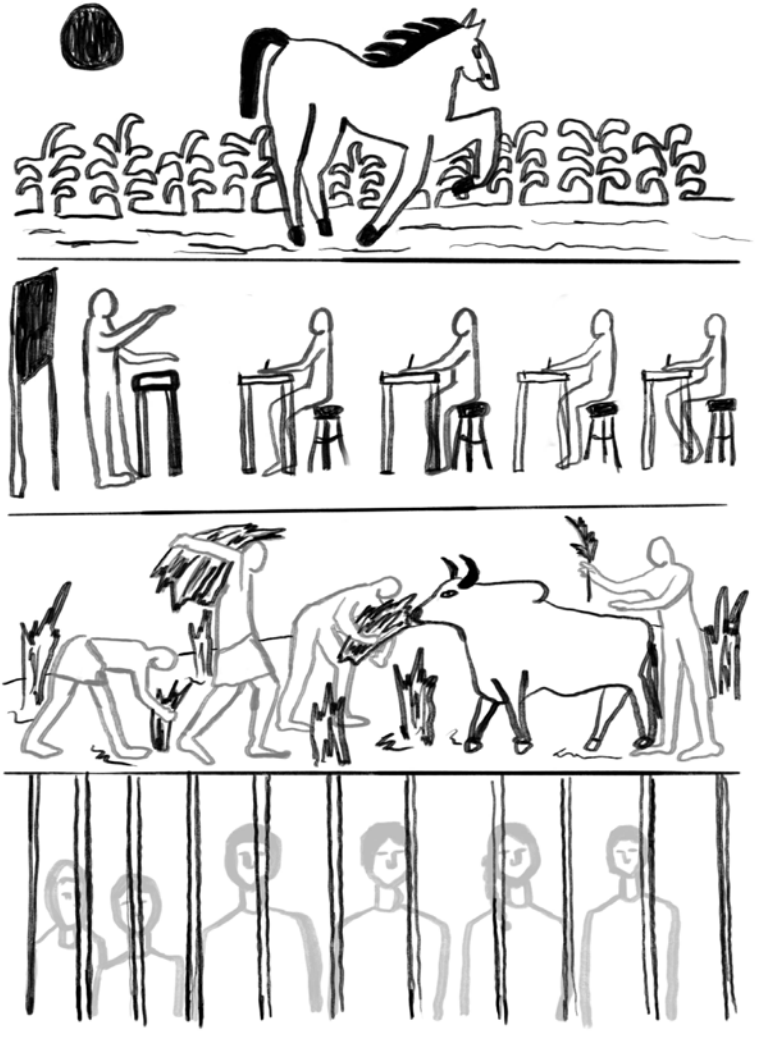
Style of Language

The ideological naturalisation of a certain rationale for the reproduction of the self and society requires a specific style of language. This I will term *set language*. One of the difficult aspects of praxis psychotherapy is building a different style of language to explore and emerge from the pre-existing form of social reproduction. This is one of the more important and intimate challenges in therapy. Language does not determine reality and so a command over language does not determine depth of thought or knowledge about reality. Rather, language articulates our construal of reality to others we labour with to reproduce reality. In this sense, language and labour are linked in complex ways.

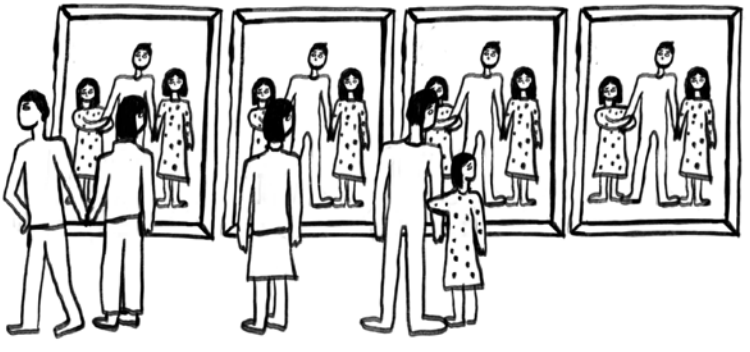
Once a set language is broken, the creativity of creating a new style of language to communicate construals ease the articulation of emergence. For this reason, during many of the sessions between clients and myself, I attempt to demonstrate concepts nonverbally through drawings. This can be a strong conceptual tool. For myself and clients, it was usually helpful and even added to the richness of the session. Unfortunately, I cannot provide the drawings from the aforementioned clients because the notebooks from these sessions remain in Khartoum. However, working closely with Ruehl Muller and Tran Bao Ngoc, we were able to fuse psychosocial concepts and philosophies with illustrations, based on those original drawings. What follows are renditions of concepts articulated in this chapter.



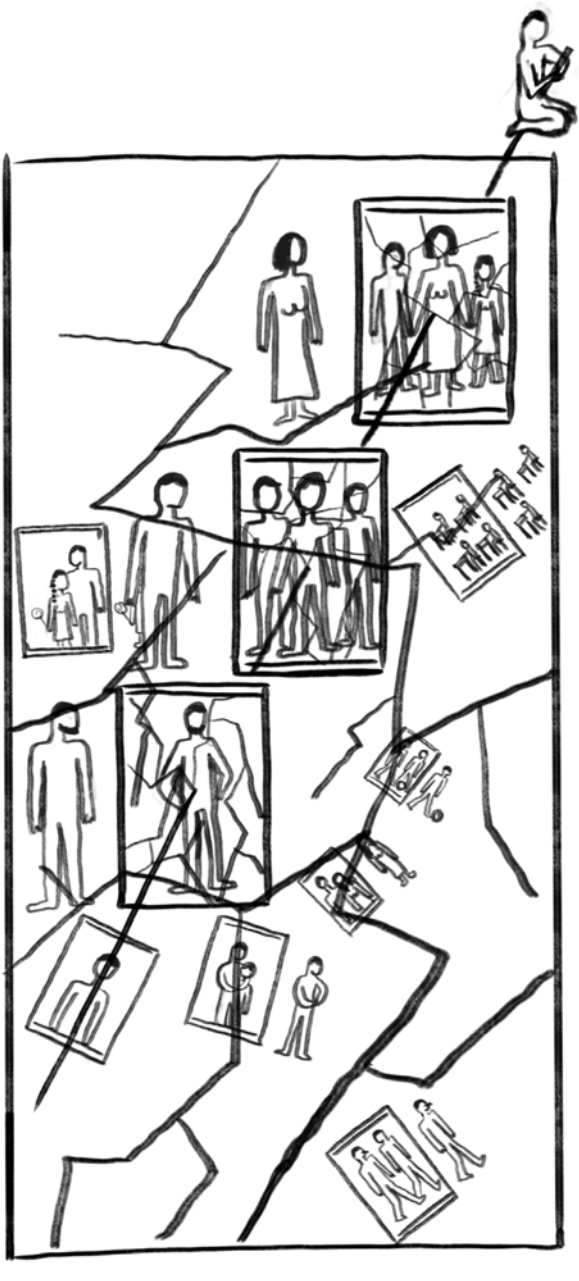
For FT, the infantilised unrequited obsession with a partner was not driven by desire, but by a cycle of reproduction, which can be defined as the crystallisation, of the self in relation to another, which was caused by the dispossession of curiosity at childhood. The illustration shows that not only does any image of herself require another, but is split, crystallised in the trauma of curiosity dispossession. Her attachment is not based on desire but on familiarity.



This rendering represents the immateriality of those who are differently citizen-ised. They gain more texture as they metamorph into a horse, representing utility. The lowest layers represent them, ghost-like, being ideologically criminalised for existing, or categorised as not fully formed. As they transcend the hierarchy, they gain more texture, but only insofar as they can be deemed 'useful' and integrated into the new racial regime. EJ finds himself in the lowest strata, ideologically and racially criminalised.



In this illustration, LW finds herself re-visiting the 'museum of the self' at different stages of her life, and always the same painting: a neurotic attachment to her father forged within a certain standard of femininity. A comforting relationship, insofar as it remains feminised. This feminisation, however, conserves her in a certain mold that is inescapable without escaping the privileges of bourgeois femininity.



The act of class suicide is represented with the act of *harakiri,* at the top right corner of the illustration. It is not an immediate process; class suicide affects, and will continue to affect, the social reality of those who commit to the process. It is not merely the unclinging from the chain of class continuity, but a destructive process that shatters the social image of the self. This jeopardises not just the self but those realities which were socially cultivated with the now-dead self. Hence the illustration reflects the many social realities that are shattered by the death of the self within a class. This represents the next case study, that of NG.

Reproductive Labour and Class Suicide

In the following case study, I will reflect on the conditions under which NG was reproduced and socialised. The reason for this is to further elaborate on reproductive labour and the social expressions of patriarchy. It is also to stress that though praxis psychotherapy centers the process of emergence, it is not solely through psychotherapy that emergence takes place as the relationship between NG and myself was not psychotherapuetic. The necessary conditions for emergence are not psychotherapeutic, but take the form of libratory social relations and labour—see Part IV. Praxis psychotherapy encourages emergence on the interpersonal level, more significantly, it articulates how the interpersonal dynamics under which we reproduce ourselves relate to the reproduction of society. In that sense, it demonstrates a socialisation structure, the shape and practice of which resonates with others reproducing themselves under similar conditions and societies.

There are certain social experiences that seem anachronistic in that moment. One such experience for NG occurred during the late '90s and early 2000s, where many children in the MENA region watched the *Spacetoon* television channel with varying degrees of religiosity. As a pre-teen, NG was partial to a particular cartoon wherein the protagonist, who was destitute, lost their parents at a young age and was left to fend for themself. NG recalls being moved to tears at the recognition of the protagonist's suffering. Bizarrely, because other cartoons, which were similarly tragic, did not have the same effect.

Trying to understand this peculiar reaction was difficult, but important—not least considering both NG's parents are alive and affluent, and tried their best to provide for their children what they deemed appropriate. However, this was the first profound signifier of an alienation from NG's parents. One difficult conclusion NG was able to realise at a young age was that he and his parents never actually succeeded in establishing a meaningful relationship. The reason for which was the ideology and practice that underpinned their reproduction.

NG's father was a wealthy trader and proprietor, whereas his mother came from a historic landed gentry. The ideology that they are committed to is the myth of self accomplishment, self-sacrifice, patronage, patriarchy, etc. For both, these ideologies—which justify their wealth in relation to the poor majority—are important to preserve the circuits of accumulation. It was important not only to internalise these ideologies, but to advance them in order to belong to this class and group structure—the capitalist, the family. Ideology's purpose is not simply to assuage but to insist on a certain psychosocial ideal that would ensure the continued accumulation for oneself, their children and their class. The perpetuation of these ideologies is not through rhetoric and persuasion, but through power dynamics, appropriating and commanding surplus labour and the means of (re)production.

These ideologies influence politics and the economy, they also influence psychology *directly*, not just peripherally. NG was born for purely ideological reasons, not out of freedom, but a certain ideological necessity. His parents consciously married to unconsciously reproduce a family underpinned by the aforementioned ideologies. His birth and subsequent reproduction constitutes the first form of alienation—where belonging to a pre-existing family structure is predicated on a commitment to a pre-existing naturalised ideology. An ideology to which NG had to subscribe, be subservient to and emulate in order to belong. The ideology rationalised appropriating surplus labour and means of (re)production.

The relationship between himself and his parents was one where his father's patriarchy was expressed (and reaffirmed) through a tyrannical demand for obedience to his petty and menial tasks. Not unlike other patriarchs, there was always a menial task for NG to perform; appropriating surplus labour for labour power accumulation, not necessarily for any economic circuits of accumulation. Rebellion from which would incur the wrath of the whip—and NG was rebellious. All the while, NG's mother incessantly reminded him of her and his father's 'sacrifices,' to reaffirm the debt NG owed for his reproduction. This overwhelming sense of debt for having been reproduced, articulated through the cosmology of sacrifice, is widely practised. That said, it is more ideologically insisted upon within the upper classes, as they subsidise reproductive labour and insist it is *their* proprietary labour that actualises value. In regards to NG,

this inspired kleptomania as a form of resistance—he was partial to soda cans and chocolates, with an occasional luxury item.

The ideological commitments NG was birthed under, ones that determined the relationship with his parents, were contradictory and the ideals espoused were not lived up to. The petty tyranny of his father was practised on his labour force with a paternalistic tinge that managers and fellow proprietors viewed as industrious because it evoked a particular ideal, savviness and aspiration. The contradiction was that these idealised projections of a patriarchal self were generated through the exploitation and appropriation of the labour force and, for NG, the spirit-breaking of a non-conforming child with menial tasks. There was nothing savvy about this violence. It was a continued reproduction of a cycle of inherited discipline and violence. For NG's mother, it was the subsidisation of reproductive labour and insistence on debt obligation through the language of sacrifice which safeguarded this process of violence. This is care labour as conceptualised along capitalist property relations.

To a young man, this represented the beginning of a traumatic awareness of a decay of seemingly primordial ideals. Hence NG's partiality to the cartoon. Adopting these contradictions would perpetuate social reproduction along already existing violent processes and structures. The debt relations that parents deploy are perhaps one of the most powerful ideas to demand conformity, subservience, and authority. What follows is a note on debt.

David Graeber started his book *Debt: The First 5000 Years* with the question of why do we honour debt to our own detriment and the detriment of others.[58] In this book, he also notes how there are certain conceptions that suggest the way to pay back the debt children accrue from their parents is through becoming parents themselves. I believe this is true to maintain an ideological belonging to a group structure which is conceptualised transcendentally. However, conceptions of family under capitalist societies generate ideas of debt based on self-sacrificial utilitarianism.

58 David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5000 Years* (Melville House, 2014), 3.

There will be no *deus ex machina* for debt obligations under capitalism. In fact, self-sacrificing utilitarianism is generated and further generates conceptions such as retirement pensions, which shape our understanding of debt obligation.

There is a general understanding that one labours for their retirement pension which is a powerful mute compulsion. The certainty of a pension replaces the *deus ex machina* and informs the sacrificial ideologies underpinning reproductive debt obligations. It is the corporeal representation of the progressive linearity of history. It is not religion that is the "opiate of the masses," it is the retirement pension.[59] Here, it is worth noting Melinda Cooper's historical point that during the second half of the 20th century, "pension fund managers were investing in a business form—the leveraged buyout—that called for the slashing of workforces and the active suppression of wages."[60] These were managers, ironically, whose job it was to secure better pensions for workers, yet aided in degrading work conditions.

For NG, and many socialised in these conditions, this compulses subservience. It is in this light that discipline is enacted and justified. The importance of understanding debt ideologically is that it hinders our emergence and limits conceptions of freedom. An example that can be generally appreciated is how the sense of debt towards one's family can hinder emergence and even subdue many from addressing tyrannical behavior. *Compromise* becomes the outcome. However, in reality, compromise is a euphemism for cowardice.

For NG's father, it was important to reproduce these ideologies in order to justify his relative wealth and the inequality between himself and the labour force. It was also important ideologically to justify neutralising any challenges to his authority that needed to be maintained to legiti-

59 It should be noted that vulgar understandings of Marx's polemic about religion has done much harm to organising.

60 Melinda Cooper, *Counterrevolution: Extravagance and Austerity in Public Finance* (Zone Books, 2024), 64.

mate his relative power position—hence the cane. NG's mother utilised this ideology somewhat differently.

It is widely believed that misogyny today is the result of social progress for women in the workplace, which has displaced the traditional role of men as breadwinners of the family and caused a 'crisis of masculinity.' While this is true at a shallow level of abstraction, the gendered mode of analysis does not capture the phenomenon completely. While men were the traditional breadwinners in the prosperous post-war years, it was a certain class of men, who *racially belonged*. As the story goes, during these prosperous post-war years, there was more vertical equality, meaning inequality between classes was not as wide as it is today. However, there was a lack of horizontal equality at the time, meaning women and racialised people did not enjoy the same economic prosperity as their typically male, middle-class, belonging counterparts.

The class (and legal) warfare that was waged during the Thatcher and Reagan era began superficially challenging the vertical equality enjoyed by middle-class families. Some of the ways in which this was done was through intensifying the individualisation of equality—whereby every individual was now responsible for their equality—with a special focus on women, who represented a supposedly 'new' source of labour power. A significant faction of feminist movement moved away from its class-based praxis and entered cosmopolitan individualism.[61] The individualisation logic was forced onto all and became part and parcel of neoliberal culture. The logic that progress should be seen as an individual success took root, changing the matrix of equality, which would now be measured in the success of individuals who represent the progress of their group's identity. Supposedly, equality is not vertical anymore, but horizontal.

In reality, there was no vertical equality, nor is there horizontal equality today. In the post-war period, it was mostly the middle class that enjoyed the period's prosperity—including women from this class. In fact, some privileged women upheld patriarchal ideology and internalised misogyny to maintain their privilege, vis-à-vis strict gender roles and racialisation. While they maintained gender roles under the rubric of a certain white femininity, in practice it was the immigrant class and

61 Rafia Zakaria, *Against White Feminism* (Penguin UK, 2021), 112.

'southerns' in Europe, the African-Americans and Latin Americans in the US, the west and south Sudanese and Ethiopians in Sudan, etc., who upheld reproductive labour and continue to do so directly or indirectly today. (In Europe, for example, the healthcare and social work sector are staffed with immigrant workers—when I began writing this piece, I too was working in the social services sector). This is the class which has been used as fodder for maintaining the racial regime, regardless of vertical or horizontal equality. Not just in the Global North, but also in the Global South —see Part III, 'The Famed Nimeiry Years'.

While there are theorists who argue that there is a naturalisation process that took place, naturalising the role of women as reproductive labour (which can be extrapolated to suggest white femininity domesticated women), this does not explain the above-mentioned trend of a racialised reproductive workforce who are underpaid and increasingly men, or that cosmopolitan feminism aspires beyond domesticity. More recently, the 'cost disease' was suggested to try and understand such economic dynamics as the 'crisis of care.'[62] However, while the cost disease may be a useful methodological tool to understand the crisis of care (investment and technological stagnation)[63] due to its classical economic orientation (equal exchange between equals), it does not address in any meaningful way exploitation, racialisation, nor the violence required to reproduce capitalist society.

NG's mother is a woman who enjoyed the boom of her time. Particularly in her marriage to a proprietary husband and coming from a family belonging to the gentry. She upheld the ideological naturalisation that helped exploit the domestic labour force—vis-à-vis patriarchy and internalised misogyny.

His parents' insistence on perpetuating patriarchal practices and ideas meant that NG's reproduction—which is facilitated through pre-existing reproductive structure that informed the foundation of belonging to a family—was coercive. The cartoon's protagonist's suffering resonated with NG because it was an inarticulate recognition of coercion

62 Alyssa Battistoni, "Ideology at Work? Rethinking Reproduction," *American Political Science Review*, 2024, 11.

63 William J. Baumol, *The Cost Disease: Why Computers Get Cheaper and Health Care Doesn't* (Yale University Press, 2012), 21.

that collateralised belonging. He was coerced to accept ideas over matter; it was an exploited and racialised underclass that was subsidised for reproductive labour and was demanded to be acknowledged as *his mother's sacrifice and suffering* which reproduced him, or the society around him—not the exploited. In fact, she laboured in the exploitation of reproductive labour.

This labour was in the form of surveillance and management. NG's mother would manage and oversee reproductive labour while also 'educating' domestic workers on certain dos and don'ts along lines of femininity. This is not too dissimilar to the white feminism as described by Rafia Zakaria. While surveillance was justified to ensure no valuables were stolen, it also played a significantly more important role: credit for the reproductive labour, which she would valorise through surveillance. Surveillance is what she means when debt is mentioned, which ideologically translates to paternalistic protectionism along pristine lines of motherhood as an authoritarian ideology. Care labour is enclosed within the sovereignty of pristine motherhood.

Emergence is not moralising reproduction, it is a direct challenge to society's and the self's set dynamics of reproduction. As such, praxis psychotherapy is psychotherapy as epistemology, not psychotherapy as ethics. For NG's parents, it is not the ethics of the violence they exert to insist on an ideological naturalisation, but the epistemic position they need to maintain due to continuously entrenching themselves at different ruptures. Their image of the self is fossilised over these multiple entrenchments, meaning emergence would not only destroy their image of the self, but challenge the social formations they are reproduced under.

There are tendencies within the cost disease economists who suggest that one of the reasons why care labour is expensive is because the face-to-face labour required, that cannot be digitalised fully, is ideological. Simply, that social attitudes towards care are value-laden, which does not allow technology to progress, leaving care labour technologically stagnant. While this may be demonstrated empirically, the paradigm of the formulation is deterministic in its view of technology. Suggesting that technological progress is a secular process is an argument that cannot be substantiated.

Fundamentally, what this case study shows is that NG's parents abdicated care labour to domestic workers and technology. The cartoon represents, in reality, an attempt to replace the face-to-face interactions necessary for care labour with technology, and the experience was traumatic.

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Even if all these experiences are analysed more sharply, combating them by simply aligning them with antithetical forms of self-reproduction does not automatically bring about emergence. In relation to NG's case study, reproductive labour is not generated through a primordial maternalistic force, but necessary labour power.

Being raised by an exploited class was one of the more significant motives for emergence. Nonetheless, the conditions NG was reproduced under—through the racialisation of labour—reproduces racism and sexism. For NG, to confront this hierarchy, there needed to be a severing of ideological belonging. What may be called *class suicide*.

It's worth reflecting on this case study for at least four main reasons:

1. Exploitative reproductive labour is relegated to the precariously poor, racialised and mostly women (though increasingly done by immigrant men).

2. Emergence is not necessarily brought about through a therapeutic relationship. The condition that encouraged class suicide were facilitated through engaging in and with reproductive labour. It was NG's discussions with myself and other comrades that crystallised what has occurred, where we were able to create the language style to explain the social and psychological situation in which class suicide occurred.

3. Revolution does not necessarily only take place in the confrontation of oppressive state apparatus, though this is essential. Depending on the person and the society and the relationship between the two, it can also take on a plethora of forms. The stage of struggle is not only on the factory lines, offices, ships, and other direct economic practices, it is also at home, between friends, in relationships

with land and nature, etc. Though it cannot be diffused, and must be connected to a wider goal of social transformation, otherwise it is not a revolution but mere resistance and compromise. One area of organising that needs much more attention is the healthcare and social care industry.

4. Praxis psychotherapy encourages emergence, not as a state, but as a process.

There is, after all, a deterministic tendency within forms of Marxism to suggest that there will be a workers' consciousness (and through it, rebellion against capitalism). There are two problems with this assumption: firstly, in some iterations, it conforms to an idealised stagist history, mostly based on theories of modes of *subsistence*. This leads to the second problem: suggesting that a determinate socialist rebellion to capitalism is inevitable marginalises the social and dynamic component of the movement of history—class conflict. There needs to be a form of willingness to tackle class exploitation that, as we are witnessing today, is not determined. Praxis psychotherapy aims at substituting the flawed idea of a determined conscious awareness with the concept of emergence.

As is demonstrable in some of the aforementioned case studies, while the working class can harbour elite aspiration, they will not automatically reach a mature state of "anti-capitalist consciousness"—and even if they did, it could simply be a conservative anti-capitalism. There needs to be labour to encourage emergence.

Part III

The Current Moment and Darfur

"Darfuris will be African Palestinians."[64]

64 Collins, *A History of Modern Sudan*, 299.

Virtually all reporting on the latest civil war in Sudan is preoccupied with political identities, a litany of *exposés* of the two antagonists, Burhan and Hemedti. This is a reductive and tautological framing that obscures both reality and its history and, more importantly, essentialises political actors and political actions—i.e. the inevitability of 'tribal' war. It is my opinion that the motivation for this narrow abstraction is, in large part, a consequence of the social class of the authors and narrators of the conflict. By and large, journalists, commentators, politicians, aid workers, etc., take the locus of analysis as being the capital of accumulation, Khartoum. This lens does a great injustice to the current political reality in Sudan. The fact that the civil war broke out in Khartoum imbues it with a certain urgency inside (and outside) Sudan that was not afforded to the genocide in Darfur, and the historic domination experienced by South Sudanese, which, as I will demonstrate in this reflection, is essential to understanding the current civil war.

United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) pandered to the warring sides even though the revolutionaries brought down the dictatorship; certain journalists are more loyal to publishing than the truth; and politicians use this opportunity for promotion, all of whom's imaginations are Khartoum-centric. This is not to cast an ethical judgement on individuals but to suggest, as was insinuated in Part II, that liberation comes in the form of social and psychological emergence from the set reproduction of a commercial absolutist society and the complexes of operating within these set reproductions. This reflection tries to break this mould and tradition of essentialising the Khartoum experience and the binaries that are attached to it.

To understand the current conflict in Sudan beyond the Manichean binary of good army versus bad army, it needs to be historically contextualised. This reflection explores the history of Sudan, and west Sudan more specifically, for context.

Khartoum and Darfur

In the formation of a nation-state, the stratification and bureaucratisation of society happens atop existing antagonisms and historic dynamics. The reason for this is that when accumulation by dispossession occurs, as mentioned, society enters an *irrational revolution* where the known mechanisms of society's reproduction are attacked or repurposed to suit capitalist property relations. The reaction is often to reconstitute pre-accumulation by dispossession dynamics within capitalist arrangements.

The antagonisms that underlie the formation of the Sudanese state are complicated and varied. However, to understand the civil war in Sudan today, one needs to understand the prominence of Khartoum as the capital of Sudan. In 1825, Uthman Bey displaced farmers from the land where the White and Blue Nile met to establish Khartoum (Khartoum translates to 'elephant's trunk').[65] He managed this by ordering the *Nizam al-Jadid* army to harass the farmers. His army consisted of slaves from the Nuba mountains, corroborators from the *Shaygiya* group and professional soldiers. From that point on, administration and power became centralised in Khartoum. Today, Khartoum exists as a completely different reality from the rest of Sudan.

During this time, in the west of Sudan, there was a viable feudal Fur Sultanate that had existed since at least the 17th century—until the late 19th century when collaborators, namely slaver and freebooter al-Zubeir Rahma Mansour, equipped with Remington rifles, destroyed the Fur army and the centuries-old Sultanate. This was one of the more fundamental moments in Sudanese history where the formation of the Sudanese state incorporated the Darfur region. The aforementioned Madhist revolution liquidated the Turko-Egyptian empire in 1885 to establish itself atop of the incorporated Sudan.[66] The Madhist Caliphate was

65 Robert C. Stevenson, "Old Khartoum, 1821–1885," *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1966, 2.

66 Jay O'Brien, "Review: Class and Power in Sudan: The Dynamics of Sudanese Politics, 1898–1985, by Tim Niblock," *The International Journal of African Historical* Studies, 1988, 10.

short-lived, whereupon the plains of Karari, on 2 September 1898, the Anglo-Egyptian army defeated the Caliphate.[67]

Ali Dinar al-Fadl seized the opportunity to reclaim his title as Sultan of the Fur following the collapse of the Mahdist Caliphate. He succeeded in ousting the Mahdists that occupied the Fur region and regained his title. In 1900, the British administration of Sudan recognised Dinar as the Sultan of the Fur region in exchange for symbolic tributes. In the first decade of his reign, Ali Dinar was challenged by the Rizayqat leader Musa Maddibu, who refused to pay tribute.[68] This escalated into a feud and in October 1913, Dinar's 6,000-strong army advanced into Rizayqat territory. The two sides fought for five days until Dinar's army was forced to retreat. Though the Rizayqat army had won this battle, their lands were left devastated and they were forced to accept the sovereignty of Ali Dinar on the command of the British controlled Khartoum administration.

This collaboration between the British and Dinar's tributary Sultanate was short-lived when Dinar, for various geopolitical reasons and the outbreak of World War I, declared war on the Europeans.[69] On 23 May 1916, an Anglo-Egyptian force of 2,500 men devastated Dinar's Sultanate. From that day onwards, Darfur and west Sudan was purposefully neglected; it became a testing ground for policies of disenfranchisement and erasure—a place which consecutive governments of Sudan have designated as waste.

Following Dinar's defeat, the British implemented a strictly hierarchical system of governance in the region of west Sudan at minimal cost. Known as indirect rule, or native administration, this system was set up to ensure the interest of the Anglo-Egyption hegemony from Khartoum. Indirect rule consisted mainly of hierarchical hereditary elite rule. The *Umda*, the *Nazir*, and the *Shaykh*, all of whom ruled over the peoples of the region; they distributed land, resolved grievances and feuds, oversaw an arbitrary justice system, and had a feudal complexion complete with

67 Robert S. Kramer, "The Capitulation of the Omdurman Notables." *Sudanic Africa*, 1992, 41.

68 Some claim that Hemedti is a descendent of Maddibu, which adds to his legitimacy within the Rizayqat elite.

69 John Slight, "British Perceptions and Responses to Sultan Ali Dinar of Darfur, 1915–16," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 2010.

indentured servants and minor tributes. Most importantly, this system was entirely dependent on the patronage of the British officers, who propped up these *Umdas*, *Nazirs* and *Shaykhs*.[70]

Under the patronage of the British, history was effectively halted and there was no movement for revolution (emergence) or 'modernisation' (entrenchment). This can be seen in the quashing of the Nyala uprising of September 1921 wherein a few British officers and a few dozen Sudanese soldiers were killed. The revolt did not last very long and was quashed by the year's end.[71] The halting of history did not just occur by quashing revolts and installing puppeteered indirect rule; it was also the purposeful defunding of education and healthcare. By the mid-1930s, 500,000 Darfuri children relied on only one elementary school and two literary schools. The budget for education was extremely paltry.

Following the 1924 revolt in Khartoum by the liberal professionally-educated class, the British viewed any means of educating the native population anywhere as jeopardising the colonial enterprise everywhere. Indirect rule was thus intensified across Sudan. In Darfur, and other places in Sudan, this meant an Islamic education through Quran recitation and memorisation in the *Khalwat*. The British Governor of Darfur wrote in mid-1938 that they "have been able to limit education to the sons of Chiefs and native administration personnel and can confidently look forward to keeping the ruling classes at the top of the elementary tree for many years to come."[72] During British colonial rule, not a single new school was opened in Darfur.

As for healthcare, Darfur was the only province with no maternity clinic in the entirety of Sudan. For context, Darfur is larger than Germany. "Epidemics were endemic, disease often being carried by the pilgrims from West Africa; smallpox, cerebrospinal meningitis, relapsing fever, and kala-azar (leishmaniasis) were common."[73] The British, like

70 Hamid E. Ali, *Darfur's Political Economy: A Quest for Development* (Routledge, 2014), 14.

71 Awad Al-Sid Al-Karsani, "The Establishment of Neo-Mahdism in the Western Sudan, 1920–1936." *African Affairs,* 1987.

72 Robert O. Collins, "The Disaster in Darfur in Historical Perspective," *The Journal of Conflict Studies*, 2006, 34

73 Robert O. Collins, *A History of Modern Sudan* (Cambridge University Press,

the Turks before them, and the consecutive Sudanese governments after them, neglected west Sudan and treated Darfur merely as a laboratory or as waste.

The Famed Nimeiry Years

In the Sudanese imagination, Nimeiry is remembered rather fondly. The phrase "*ayam al-Numiri*" (Nimeiry days) has entered the popular lexicon, pointing to a more serene time in the history of post-independence Sudan. The nostalgia, especially among the boomer generation, is generated by the anecdotal experiences of many northerners at the time. Comparing the Sudan of today to the Sudan of the Nimeiry days sanitises the policies and dynamics set in motion at that time that have had devastating effects today. In this reflection, as well as the later section 'Historic Dynamics and Transitions in Sudan' (see p. 101), I will demonstrate how these famed Nimeiry years not only privileged few and damned many, but laid the foundation of financialisation that produced the exploitation and destruction we see continuing today.

A potent example of how Khartoum views Darfur as a wasteland can be found in the handling of the Darfur famine of the mid 1980s. Between 1983–1985, al-Fashir (the capital of North Darfur) received only one third of the usual rainfall. In 1984, this led to 300,000 famine-stricken west Sudanese immigrating to the capital, mostly to the Omdurman region. Many more were displaced to different parts of the country. Nimeiry's orders were to round up the starving refugees in Khartoum and dump them back in the wastelands in Darfur. Only a fraction of those that tried to seek refuge in Omdurman managed to stay. According to USAID figures, "by the end of 1984, there were an estimated 42,000 destitute migrants in makeshift encampments in Omdurman."[74]

Modernisation and improvement under capitalism require the intensification of accumulation by dispossession and the exploitation of labour. For Sudan, modernisation—via the intensification of accumulation by dispossession—came with the historically predictable destruction of

2008), 277.

74 *USAID*, "SUDAN—Drought/Famine," 1984.

the Left and reactionary triumphalism. Characteristic of the enterprise of Arab-Nationalism of the Nasserite and Ba'athist persuasion, Nimeiry's politics were based more on opportunism than any form of distributive democratic socialism. This can be seen in his policies following the mass execution of communists after the failed coup of 1971.

Even though Nimeiry retained the rhetoric of socialism, his policies were anything but. Only two years after the failed coup, thirty companies and banks that had been nationalised returned back to their 'owners.' This was followed with a litany of policies which were favourable to the IMF; the Development and Promotion of Industrial Investment Acts of 1972 and 1974, the Development and Encouragement of Agricultural Investment Act of 1976, and the Encouragement of Investment Act of 1980.

These policies were complemented by a Gulf-led initiative to transform Sudan into the breadbasket of the Middle East after the Arabs suffered a major defeat in the Ramadan/Yom Kippur War of 1973. With an influx of cash from the Gulf and the shedding of socialist commitments, Nimeiry's government was coasting on a delirium of accumulation. One of the biggest influxes of cash came from the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development for a plan that envisioned "more than $6 billion over the next ten years for 100 projects."[75]

Like vultures, elite-educated Arab advisors flocked to help 'manage' Nimeiry's new investment pools. Among this managerial class, few were more predatory than Adnan Khashoggi, who managed to secure many multi-million dollar loans that amounted to little more than embezzlement. This included the import of a significant number of German trucks that were unusable in Sudan, a textile factory that never became operational, and an oil refinery that was never built. To quote Alison Ayers,

> The period since 1972 and the 'open door policy' (infitah), in particular, has witnessed the abandonment of all attempts at independence from international capital. Rather, external factors have come to play a "far more important role in the shaping of national policies and strategies", restructuring the Sudanese economy and shifting resource utilisation increasingly from the domestic needs to the imperatives of global capital. The creation of a more conducive environment to foreign capital included denationalisation, suppression of

75 Jack G. Kaikati, "The Economy of Sudan: A Potential Breadbasket of the Arab World?" *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 1980.

> trade unions and the introduction of new investment Acts. Through such policies and widely-available petro-dollar loans, Sudan dramatically expanded mechanised agricultural production as its 'breadbasket strategy' prioritised "export-oriented products ... based on the accelerated expansion of large-scale capitalist farm[ing]". Despite the rapid increase in the land under cultivation and the increased export capacity, the breadbasket strategy failed. With the systemic crisis of global capitalist accumulation in the 1970s, Sudan saw the value of its primary commodities decline on international markets, and oil prices soar, as debt and debt-servicing obligations increased. The crisis reached its nadir in 1977-8 as Sudan became reliant on the US to negotiate the rescheduling of debt and further loans from the IMF, and became the largest recipient of US aid in sub-Saharan Africa.[76]

The neglect of west Sudan was never addressed. Even with the seemingly endless supply of money, nothing significant was ever done to address the decay and disenfranchisement of the region. On 5 September 1975, colonel Hasan Husayn headed a coup to depose Nimeiry that was ultimately quashed. Though unsuccessful, it pointed to the deep dissatisfaction among western Sudanese with the Khartoum government, which was opportunistically basking in their delirium of accumulation.

For west Sudan, one of the more significant acts passed during Nimeiry's reign was the Regional Government Act of 1980. This act was intended to decentralise north Sudan to 5 regions: North, East, Central, Kordofan, and Darfur. Despite its annexation in 1916, it was only after the 1981 popular intifada that a Darfurian was appointed as governor for Darfur.[77] However, characteristic of Nimeiry's rule, it was all panache and poorly executed.

Its failure stemmed primarily from two reasons. First, for the various regions, their dependence on the central government became immediately clear—simply articulating an act is not enough for regional autonomy. Second, for the center, devolution was antithetical to Nimeiry's grand national economic projects as these projects were mostly concentrated in the center with the west further economically disenfranchised. (A third, personal reason was that civil servants were dependent on the accessibility of services in the capital and would have to do without in the periphery).

76 Alison J. Ayers, "Beyond the Ideology of 'Civil War': The Global-Historical Constitution of Political Violence in Sudan," *The Journal of Pan-African Studies*, 2012, 275.

77 Ali, *Darfur's Political Economy*, 19.

The state of delirium of accumulation and centralisation of economic and political power coincided with the aforementioned famine when, in 1984, west Sudanese sought refuge in Khartoum and were met with violence. In fact, then-Darfur governor, Ahmed Ibrahim al-Diraig, distributed a letter to the embassies and NGOs in Khartoum warning about the devastation of the famine. Nimeiry, however, dismissed these warnings as rumours.

How Arab Supremacy was Cultivated in Darfur

Beyond Darfur, the history of neglect and subordination of South Sudan is well documented. Before the split of the two Sudans, the south played an integral part in shaping the politics of Sudan with every government having to grapple with the question of South Sudan. Without exception, every central government maintained an uneasy relationship with the south, with Omar al-Bashir's dictatorship being the most outwardly hostile—at one point forcibly conscripting citizens to fight South Sudan's resistance and liberation movements, a policy that became a major catalyst for dissent against the northern regime.

To use an emblematic example of the north's treatment of southerners, in June 1965, prime minister Muhammed Ahmed Mahjoub ordered the army to harass educated elite southern Sudanese. A soldier was killed by a southerner over a dispute. In retaliation, on 8 July 1965, officers in the Guba garrison went on a murderous spree, killing 1,400 southerners. That same week, officers stationed at Wau opened fire on a wedding and killed 76 south Sudanese. Khartoum's modus operandi was (and, for the most part, remains) the complete negligence of the periphery while still extracting wealth and labour from it. The current civil war in Sudan is hard to grasp without understanding the historic dynamics in Darfur and the south—particularly the geopolitics that undergirded the Bashir and Turabi dictatorship and Khartoum's enduring interest in those regions.

In 1969, Gaddafi, Nimeiry and Sadaat began establishing the Tripoli Charter, the first steps to found a tripartite relationship in respect to the

three countries.[78] This was largely the ambition of Gaddafi who dreamed of an "Islamic State of the Sahara." Though his ambition did not come to pass, Gaddafi was persistent and eventually became a patron for different Arab supremacist groups in Darfur, such as the Islamic Legion mercenaries, in an effort to bring about a greater Libya-Darfur state.

Simultaneously, Chad's president Hissène Habré, who had strong links to western Darfur, had an influential presence in that region and commanded 10,000 members of mostly ethnically African groups. This inevitably led to a proxy war between Libya and Chad in Darfur. Gaddafi continued his presence in Darfur even after Nimeiry's fall in 1985 and, in 1987, Hasan al-Turabi, the leader of the reactionary NIF, rode the wave of Gaddafi's hubris to Arabise west Sudan through organising Arab groups in Kordofan and Darfur.

This empowerment of the Arab groups in Darfur precipitated the Arab Gathering, who, on 5 October 1987, published a letter declaring that "the neglect of the Arab race continues", later on voicing their intent to massacre Africans. This was directed at the then-prime minister Sadiq al-Mahdi.

Gaddafi provided a near limitless supply of weapons to these Arab groups, and to the region of central Darfur. This influx of arms was, according to Collins, "the most unsavory act by [Gaddafi] in his thirty years of war to control Chad and his efforts to destabilise Darfur."[79] In response to these escalations, the people of Darfur organised a 6,000-man Federal Army of Darfur (FAD), who were supplied with arms by Chad. In 1988, a war broke out between Arabs (Rizayqat) and Africans (Fur), where the FAD was crushed, in part due to the support of Sadiq al-Mahdi. This defeat marked a watershed moment of massacres against the African groups of Darfur, carried out by Arab groups supported by the Khartoum governments and Gaddafi. Sadiq al-Mahdi's government was helpless to stop what would become, as *Al-Ayam* Newspaper described, a genocide—and in fact, was receiving money from Gaddafi to prepare for an invasion from Chad.

In 1989, orchestrated by Hasan al-Turabi and executed by Omar

78 Peter K. Bechtold, "New Attempts at Arab Cooperation: The Federation of Arab Republics, 1971–?" *Middle East Journal*, 1973, 152.

79 Collins, *A History of Modern Sudan*, 279.

al-Bashir, a coup overthrew Sadiq al-Mahdi and seized power. Yet, little changed in the destructive dynamics plaguing Darfur. In fact, from the onset of the dictatorship, Omar al-Bashir reinforced Sudan's alliance with Libya. Sudan was waging a war on the southern front that required a significant amount of money and oil. Thus, Darfur was sacrificed to Gaddafi for this goal. To cement this alliance, in 1990, al-Bashir's government signed the Libya-Sudan Integration Charter, which symbolically satisfied Gaddafi's impulse to rule over the region of Darfur.

The fighting escalated and the bloodshed intensified. Against the backdrop of this proxy war and the regime's increased support of Gaddafi, Darfur suffered another famine in 1990–91, which Khartoum dismissed with characteristic indifference.

The alliance between the new dictatorship and Gaddafi eventually fractured. Primarily, it was due to the increased accommodation of (what Gaddafi viewed as) destabilising fundamentalists by the Khartoum government. To combat the presence of Gaddafi in Darfur and to address the proxy war in the region between Chad and Libya, al-Bashir's dictatorship deployed colonial tactics by appointing consecutive Arab-supremacist leaders loyal to Khartoum for the region.

In 1991, al-Bashir appointed al-Tayib Ibrahim Mohammed Khair, who, by 1992, deported 12,000 ethnically African people to Chad. In 2000, Abd-Allah al-Safi al-Nur was appointed governor of North Darfur; he was a prominent member of the aforementioned Arab Gathering.

Both governors, along with other Khartoum-appointed officials in Darfur, disarmed the ethnically African population. The latter, al-Nur, strategically de-weaponised the police force in Darfur, who were overwhelmingly African. The weapons were then swiftly handed over to Musa Hilal, the head of the Janjaweed and predecessor of Hemedti. The Janjaweed were, after all, an Arab militia that were supported by the Khartoum government to destroy any dissent from west Sudan and maintain Arab supremacy in the region.

One of the official appointees to Darfur by Khartoum to maintain hegemony, was Mustafa Dabi.

In early 1999, Ibrahim Yahya's status as governor of West Darfur became a

> focus for political attention following the outbreak of ethnic clashes near Geneina between Masalit farmers and 'Arab' Rizayqat pastoralists. In late January, an institution in Khartoum called the 'Consultative Council for the Rizayqat Tribe' issued a statement condemning Yahya's conduct during the clashes, blaming him for the killing of a number of senior Rizayqat leaders sent to negotiate, and claiming that it was his intention to dispose of the 'Arab' population of the state. The statement urged al-Bashir to intervene, which he promptly did, issuing an emergency decree suspending all of the West Darfur governor's security-related powers and appointing a senior general, Mustafa Dabi, to head a committee charged with 'preserving security' in the state. Yahya and many others have claimed that Mustafa Dabi effectively started the Janjaweed phenomenon in Darfur by arming 'Arab' militias to loot and destroy Masalit villages which the regular army had disarmed.[80]

Though Yahya may claim that a certain individual had "started the Janjaweed phenomenon," the contemporary history of Darfur demonstrates that the modus operandi has been the systematic stratification of society along ethnic lines. While certain Arab tribes were the frontline genocidaires, the governments in Khartoum were the reproducer of this reality. It is also important to note that, racial regimes tend to use the false idea of victimhood. While this is well documented with white supremacy, in the form of the Great Replacement or Zionism, in Sudan this was done by these Arab supremacist groups to racialise south and west Sudanese so as to naturalise their exploitation and extermination.[81] Alana Lentin relates how Zionism tries to co-opt indigeneity, in the case of Australia, by emphasising 'resilience' rather than 'victimhood' in order to justify the Israeli extermination of Palestinians. This is similar to how Arab supremacist groups portray a sense of masculine belonging to Darfur.

Whether it was the purposeful maintenance of indirect rule by the British; or Nimeiry's so-called modernisation through the intensification of accumulation by dispossession, whose opportunistic cosying up to reactionaries catalysed an Arab-supremacist reaction to those being dispossessed in the west and south of Sudan, culminating in the al-Bashir and al-Turabi's dictatorship overseeing the genocide in Darfur; or Gaddafi's ambition of a greater Libyan-Darfur state that he wished to actualise

80 Berridge, *Hasan al-Turabi*, 284.

81 Alana Lentin, *The New Racial Regime: Recalibrations of White Supremacy* (Pluto Books, 2025), 188.

by flooding the regional Arab groups with weapons; or Sadiq al-Mahdi's support for Arab supremacist groups; or the purposeful neglect of Darfuris through the dismissing of famine and treatment of internally displaced refugees as expendable, the Janjaweed phenomenon did not start with Mustafa Dabi, though he did perpetuate it. Likewise, the current civil war in Khartoum did not begin on 15 April 2023, though Burhan and Hemedti intensified it.

As we shall now see, the reason for Khartoum's policies of establishing Arab supremacy in the west was to ensure that the west does not incubate liberation movements similar to those in South Sudan—especially under the leadership of revolutionary John Garang, who championed a united, secular Sudan and posed a major threat to the oppressive Khartoum governments.

The Rebellion

Securing government support to strengthen Arab hegemony in western Sudan became complicated with the presence of Musa Hilal. Hilal, a relative of Hemedti, seized this opportunity to strengthen his forces, later agreeing to marry off his daughter to the Chadian president Idriss Déby in order to solidify his relationship with the president. He capitalised on this opportunity and consolidated power by recruiting many from west Sudan and Chad, and strengthening ties with the central government, vis-à-vis al-Bashir.

On 21 July 2001, Fur and Zaghawa political activists met in Jebel Marra. The most prominent member of the group was Abd al-Wahid al-Nur. They set out to recruit and collaborate with others sympathetic to the west Sudan liberation cause and with activists from other non-Arab groups. On 25 February 2002, they launched their first rebellion against the garrisons of Nyala and Tur. Abd al-Wahid al-Nur was elected to represent the group.

Though their cause was admirable, the liberation project was not comparable with the formidable Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in southern Sudan. Two main reasons for this are, first, the formation was based on ethnic identities, with the deputy position reserved

for a member of the Masalit group, and the chief of staff designated to a member of the Zaghawa, which inevitably exacerbated divisions within the movement. Second, many leaders were more focused on seeking support from international communities and Khartoum groups than nurturing revolutionary cadres in western Sudan.

During February 2003, amid the fractures within the aforementioned group, Al-Nur had some success in targeting military posts in Jebel Marra under the banner of a new group, the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A). This was one of the more prominent groups to combat the "brutal oppression, ethnic cleansing, and genocide sponsored by the Khartoum government."[82]

Al-Nur's SLM/A was not the only group that sought to take matters into its own hands regarding the devastation in Darfur, there was also the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) led by Khalil Ibrahim. The composition of JEM was significantly different to the SLM/A, the latter is secular, the former was forged under the ideological tutelage of al-Turabi's NIF. The JEM was initially attracted to al-Turabi's reactionary Islamism, somewhat contradictorily, however they soon recognised that it was no longer viable to change the NIF from within.[83] In May 2000, members of the group published the damning *Black Book* that highlighted the disenfranchisement of western Sudanese and underscored the futility of seeking change from within.[84]

Although the two groups were antithetical, their goals were united: to stop the violence in west Sudan. Both groups achieved some success in guerrilla warfare against the Khartoum government. In May 2003, the SLM/A, defeated a Sudanese army battalion, killing 500 soldiers and taking 300 prisoners. Before this, a successful joint mission between the JEM and SLM/A was carried out against a government airport outside of al-Fashir. During the '90s and early 2000s, the government of Khartoum was preoccupied with the rebellion in southern Sudan led by revo-

82 Veronika Danielová, "Darfur Crisis of 2003: Analysis of the Darfur Conflict From the Times of First Clashes to the Present Day," *Ethnologia Actualis*, 2014, 46.

83 Mohamed Salih, "Understanding the Conflict in Darfur," *Occasional Papers*, 2005.

84 Alex Cobham, "Causes of Conflict in Sudan: Testing the Black Book," *The European Journal of Development Research*, 2005, 9.

lutionary John Garang. Consequently, its policy in the Darfur region was to disarm all African groups, including police officers, and arm the Arab groups to promote Arab supremacy in the region. Whether it was Mustafa Dabi, al-Tayib Ibrahim Mohammed Khair, Abd-Allah al-Safi al-Nur, or Salah Ali Alghali, these official appointments to Darfur were explicitly intended to advance the ideology of Arab supremacy, in a new formation of the racial regime.

In 2003, the ethnic cleansing in Darfur escalated dramatically. The aforementioned rebellious operations of that same year prompted a severe response by the Khartoum government. With air support from the government, the Janjaweed, led by Musa Hilal at the time, perpetrated indiscriminate massacres against all three major African groups; Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa. These Janjaweed rebels, trained by the Sudanese army, would typically descend on a village, kill the men, rape the women and enslave or kill the children. They often attacked at dawn and used war cries to strike fear in civilians. The conflict between the JEM and the SLM/A on one side, and the Sudanese army and Janjaweed on the other, persisted, with the Sudanese army achieving significant victories against the SLM/A, at the expense of Darfuri civilians.

The fighting reached feverish levels, and in the beginning of 2004, 25,000 west Sudanese officers in the Sudanese army were let go due to Khartoum's paranoia of ethnic loyalties. It is estimated that 30,000 died by the Janjaweed, many were displaced and 350,000 would die due to famine and disease in west Sudan.

From Janjaweed to the Rapid Support Force

The transformation of the Janjaweed to the Rapid Support Force (RSF) is marked by deep anxiety and paranoia, and understanding this helps conceptualise the RSF's structure. The relationship between Khartoum and the Janjaweed solidified after Musa Hilal deployed his Arab Janjaweed militia to crush the rebellions from the west in the early 2000s. This policy was so that Khartoum does not encounter another rebellion similar to the southern rebellion, which had historically challenged Khartoum's

hegemony. Hilal's usefulness was rewarded by the central government, leading to the merger of his group with border security in 2005, along with an official appointment by the government. In 2010, Hilal 'won' a parliamentary seat and later was awarded with the position of Advisor to the Federal Government Chamber.

This harmony between the central government and the Janjaweed was disrupted in 2013 when Hilal chose to resign from his official role in Khartoum and start his own movement: the Sudanese Awakening Revolutionary Council (SARC). The split occurred because Hilal's demands to the central government went unmet; he believed that he had enough influence in west Sudan to make these unmet demands. The demands were the devolution of power from the center to the periphery; integrating his militia and other groups into the national army; and the development of all the five regions of north Sudan, including Darfur. The SARC even signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the SPLM. Of course, Hilal did not acknowledge his involvement in the ethnic cleansing of Darfuris or his role in the devastation of west Sudan. These four demands, along with the normalisation of ties with the South Sudanese rebels, were deemed unacceptable by the Khartoum government. In an interview, Hilal even suggested the possibility of becoming president after al-Bashir.[85] Beyond the obvious, these demands highlighted two things; Hilal's hubris, and, more importantly, the political, economic, and strategic significance of western Sudan.

The Khartoum government responded by promoting Hemedti to head a newly formed unit—the RSF—in 2013. This decision effectively sidelined Hilal and exploited the existing rift between Hemedti and Hilal.[86] This move fractured the Janjaweed, delegating Hilal an official rebel, while Hemedti was made head of an official government unit, the RSF. In return, Hemedti was granted impunity and awarded gold mines in Darfur—previously exploited by Musa Hilal.[87]

85 Sudan Democracy First, "Musa Hilal's 'Awakening': Khartoum's Worst Nightmare?" *Sudan Tribune*, 2015.

86 Mohamed Elagami, "The Checkered Past of Sudan's Hemedti," *Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy*, 2019.

87 Alex De Waal, "General Mohamed Hamdan Dagolo 'Hemedti'—World

In 2013, protests against al-Bashir erupted. The government deployed the RSF to suppress these protestors, resulting in the murder of 200 pro-democracy activists by RSF and government forces.[88] This incentivised al-Bashir to integrate the RSF deeper into the fold, transforming them into a military guard against coups and perceived threats to presidential power, driven by paranoia. Al-Bashir made Hemedti a Brigadier General. It is important to understand the context of this ascendence. Al-Turabi and several high-ranking members of the reactionary group splintered off from al-Bashir's party to form a new faction (and later party) in the late 1990s. In addition, high-ranking supporters of al-Bashir maintained a tight grip on the security apparatus. As previously mentioned, Hilal was now making significant demands and even eyeing the top position.

Al-Bashir's paranoia was not without justification. Essentially, there were three pillars of power: the army, the secret service, and the RSF. In the promotion of Hemedti, the existing animosity between the army and the RSF was ignited. An animosity everyone was acutely aware of, which only intensified after the Sudanese revolution of 2018-19, ultimately culminating in the current civil war. Many in the army were originally dissatisfied with Hemedti's promotion, particularly given the impunity and privileges granted to the RSF.

The anxiety and paranoia that led to the formation of RSF did not end with the Hemedti-Khartoum compromise. Hemedti leveraged his impunity and autonomy to engage with other states and forge additional alliances. In 2015, a deal was struck between the RSF and Saudi Arabia to deploy mercenaries to the frontlines in Yemen, where the RSF proved to be little more than cannon fodder.[89] Although the RSF's mercenary operations, aside from the killing of unarmed civilians in Darfur, was largely unsuccessful, their commercial ventures, particularly in gold mining and exporting, proved to be highly lucrative. The gold mines at Jebel Amer were exploited by the RSF, illegal routes were established and the gold found its way to the UAE in exchange for monies and military

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Peace Foundation," *World Peace Foundation*, 2019.

88 Aya Elmileik, "What Prompted the Protests in Sudan?" *Al Jazeera*, 2018.

89 Jason Burke, "Hemedti: The Feared Commander Pulling the Strings in Sudan," *The Guardian*, 2019.

equipment. The UAE is one of the biggest beneficiaries of these illegal gold routes, in return, the RSF has some of the most sophisticated weaponry in Sudan.

Recently, amid the ongoing war in Ukraine, Hemedti has successfully established ties with Russia to supply gold in response to American and European sanctions. In addition, to bolster Hemedti's position as a legitimate leader of Sudan through military means, "Israel had invited [Hemedti] to visit secretly in 2021 while trying to build relations with the Sudanese dictatorship."[90]

Historic Dynamics and Transitions in Sudan

The history of ethnic cleansing and exploitation in western Sudan is often presented, albeit incompletely, in the context of the formation of the Janjaweed and the RSF. However, to fully understand the historical dynamics that fostered this reality, we must revisit the previous cycle of accumulation, specifically the era of Nimeiry.

It was Nimeiry who implemented franchise importing and raw material exporting practices through the aforementioned laws that were put in place to favour IMF conditions. In addition to privatising banks and companies, Gulf countries injected funds into Sudan to establish a breadbasket in retaliation to the Arab defeat by Israel.

These modernisation and financialisation policies and practices deprioritised upskilling in favour of services, and many major national enterprises relied on financial backing that was directed toward private companies, resulting in the further dispossession of the labour force. A prominent example of this were the grain barons who took advantage of the cash influx from Gulf countries and the IMF influenced policies. In the late 1970s, vast areas of land—8 million acres in 1977 alone—were intensively cultivated, which had been a major source of energy and subsistence for local inhabitants. The trees cut were used to produce wood

90 Antony Loewenstein, *The Palestine Laboratory: How Israel Exports the Technology of Occupation Around the World* (Verso Books, 2023), 33.

products and had served ecologically as a buffer against the Sahara winds. The land was plowed using heavy machinery that was accessible only to those with substantial capital, which degraded the topsoil for the farmers working those lands. Once the land was depleted, these grain barons would simply move on to the next plot.

The workers affected by the devastation of their common agricultural land had to immigrate to Khartoum and other capital cities, to find work as 'low-skilled' labourers and petty traders. Many found themselves unemployed, with most originating from south and west Sudan. Typical of the capital's attitude to those in the periphery, Nimeiry deployed the police to round up the undesirables and banish them back to the land left barren by grain barons. Meanwhile, these same barons were rewarded with government and Gulf funding through contracts and exports to the Gulf and other countries.

It was also Nimeiry who intensified the fight against the unions. In mid-1981, 8,000 workers from the Sudan Railway Workers' Union went on strike, significantly impacting the Sudanese economy. Nimeiry retaliated with military crackdowns on the union, halted government funding to unions, and declared striking a treasonous act.

The state now acted as the grand delegator, relegating the poor back to their place in the periphery where they were sacrificed to the gargantuan juggernaut of the grain barons, which simultaneously devastated their bodies and their means of subsistence—topsoil and wood fuel. The state diverted funds from conditional investments by the World Bank and IMF to private firms while eliminating subsidies for the poor. Typical of neoliberal reform, defunding social services and attacking workers and land, while simultaneously militarising social spaces. To exacerbate the situation, funds from the Gulf were allocated to projects that did not last and were poorly managed.

The significance of these new economic and financial dynamics lies in how the state restructured itself for social reproduction. These dynamics were also present within the military, which enforced the border separating the 'country of Khartoum from the country of Sudan'. However, even then, the military was only successful in deporting individuals from Khartoum and was far less effective in addressing rebellions from southern Sudan.

This is an important point to understand the emergence of the Janjaweed/RSF. Unlike many analyses of Sudan that emphasise narratives of tribal warfare, religious sectarianism, or Islamist political ideology, it is more accurate to assert that financialisation policies transformed the state into a catalyst for new class formations by delegating monies to an emerging capitalist class and further dispossessing the workers, in a new racial regime. The state's delegation exploited all social categories; i.e. ethnic, racial, religious, gendered.

That is to say, the influx of Gulf capital, the policies favourable to IMF restructuring, and the ideology of Arab Nationalism, not only affect the aspects of social reproduction such as land relations—which represents a significant shift—but also labour's orientation. This orientation was not confined to the agriculture sector, which has been widely studied in the case of Sudan, but all forms of labour, including the defence sector.

This is clearly illustrated in the case of al-Bashir and al-Turabi's dictatorship. When confronted with a rebellion from the south of Sudan, they compelled children of the poor to fight by implementing conscription, thereby establishing the People's Defense Force (PDF). Of course, most wealthy people in Khartoum could buy their sons immunity from joining the conscripted army.

As previously mentioned, the regime traded Darfur to Gaddafi for petrol and weapons to combat the southern rebellion, further displacing the people of Darfur. The PDF was indoctrinated to perceive the southerners as heathens intent on seizing control over the north of Sudan, believing it was an Islamic duty to defend both nation and religion. These nationalist and traditionalist indoctrination sessions were delivered by al-Turabi's NIF cadres. By 1991, just two years after Omar al-Bashir's coup, the PDF had grown to a force of 150,000. The new racial regime through financialisation had taken root.

This marked a clear shift in the modus operandi within the defence sector. Instead of the national military being industrialised, funded, and organised for border security and serving as the sole institution authorised to use violence, the PDF were created to further deregulate defence and introduce a service-based logic to the military, in contrast to national industrialisation; *gig-militarism*. Essentially, this approach involves re-

cruiting the impoverished to fight against one another for ideologies that were introduced through violence for violence.

The delegation of the impoverished to combat the rebellion using nationalist doctrine was what the al-Bashir government inherited from the 'Nimeiry days' dynamics of social reproduction through financialisation. The state transformed into an apparatus that siphoned funds to private elites while simultaneously employing its power to dispossess the poor. This modus operandi extended to defense, as the government established paramilitary groups to assault the disenfranchised and seize their land to ensure the uninterrupted continuation of Khartoum's circuits of accumulation and hegemony.

Conscripting the poor through literal abduction—some reports indicate that men of military age were forcibly taken from public transport—these individuals were made to listen to propaganda lectures by NISS cadres to destroy the south so that Khartoum can continue extracting resources from the periphery. It was not the propaganda that motivated the conscripted, but more importantly, fear of violent repercussions.

When a rebellion was escalating in western Sudan, the racial regime expanded to accommodate the region, albeit within a significantly different historical context. Fearing similar rebellions from the west as the ones from the south, the Khartoum government established strongholds and ties with the west of Sudan as a deterrent. This strategy was inevitably undergirded by pre-existing racism and nationalism, and was bolstered by the new ideological foundation of the dictatorship that was made ubiquitous through the NISS propaganda in campaigns for forced conscriptions. To secure the west, a new class of elites had to be created along racialised lines.

Seen in that context, it was only a matter of time before the privatised and subsidised defence forces would challenge the 'legitimate' state by confronting the national military. It happened to be Burhan versus Hemedti. Even before Burhan and Hemedti, national and private militias consistently contested one another, exemplified by the antagonisms between the PDF and the national military, the NISS and the national military, as well as private militias affiliated with the top echelons of the security apparatus against the military. The allegiances and splinters be-

tween these groups, and many others, is too complex a history to furnish here. The major difference today is that the most recent civil war has collateralised Khartoum, the center of capital accumulation.

If the current Sudanese context is viewed beyond the lens of developmental racism (where every country or culture is at a certain stage of development), a lesson can be extrapolated: the dynamic of neoliberalism and financialisation can lead to the cannibalisation of the state. Where the state acts as both a mediator to favour capital and a compromising mechanism for class conflict, it will affect the latter more severely. Simply, provisions fought for by a working class will be eroded.

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Commentators, both in the Global North and South, seem to perpetuate Orientalist categories to continue the ideological othering of the Global South, thereby justifying exploitation. Whether it is the 'white man's burden', delineating groups of people as tribes forever confined to their categories, essentialising culture, or more recently, the fetishism with the concept of Islamism. The latter tendency has obscured analysis about the reality in Sudan. To clarify, the term Islamism is an amorphous label that supposedly includes any political actor who identifies as a Muslim and who has become (or in danger of becoming) a target to western military expansionism or economic embargo.

The term 'Islamism' is intended to pre-modernise political thought originating from actors who stand in the way of domination and accumulation. This is not a defence of the reactionaries or conservatives. Rather, I feel that this is an issue which is important to highlight as it obscures political analysis in the Middle East particularly.

The term 'Islamist' also serves a significant ideological role for reactionaries in Sudan. It enables them to repackage the same practices and ideologies that have disenfranchised the poor majority under a different banner. In the case of al-Turabi and his NIF, they can persist in privatising and financialising while simultaneously asserting their distinction from 'the West', and distance themselves from the calamity brought about through neoliberalism which they continue to promote.

While individuals may identify as Islamists to differentiate themselves from classic political traditions—i.e. fascism, liberalism, conservatism, communism—it can still be judged under these political traditions because the material basis of their reality is unchanged. For instance, one could argue that Nimeiry and al-Turabi hold different political orientations, where one identified as a socialist and the other an Islamist. However, both were economic liberals who advocated for deregulation and direct foreign investment. In fact, al-Turabi was Nimeiry's attorney general during the latter's final years in office. They both attended the elite Hantoob Secondary School (also known as the Eton of Sudan) at the same time.

In these reflections, I carefully use these terms, preceded by a classic category, to denote political positions, but also to use the terminology that political actors use to describe themselves. Perhaps a wider discussion on this topic is required, but is beyond the remit of these reflections. What is important to note, however, is that the label is employed multilaterally by academics, journalists and politicians of all persuasions. There are many reasons for this, but two that have become evident in the past couple of years, especially in the context of the Gaza genocide, are as follows: first, by attaching the label to a group of people, it infantilises them by portraying them as pre-modern and, consequently, lacking the capacity for modern politics. Second, for some on the Left, it must be said that their use of the label is a form of self-preservation. If one removes the colonial connotation of the label 'Islamist' from certain revolutionary groups, and seriously considers their political organising and action, then the Left would have to deeply reflect on what it would take for real anti-imperialism and anti-capitalist change. It's not attending an Ibram X. Kendi lecture or getting Antifa tattoos...

Internal to Sudanese politics, reactionaries use the term 'Islamism' to distinguish themselves from other conservative groups and to forward the claim that they oppose the 'West' (while continuing the process of extraction, racialisation and expanding markets).

Fascism in War Torn Sudan

> The truth is that Perthes [the head of UNITAMS], and behind him the United States and the European countries, bears great responsibility for this outcome in Sudan because of his insistence on appeasing the military. Instead of supporting the battle waged by the Sudanese democratic forces, led by the "resistance committees", to reject the coup carried out by the armed forces under the leadership of Abdel Fattah al-Burhan in the fall of 2021, Perthes continued to press for a new bargain with the military and dealt with Al-Burhan as if he were still the legitimate head of state.[91]

This statement exemplifies the Left's position generally with regards to the current situation in Sudan and the revolution of 2018–2019. While many may sympathise with this perspective, it is limited in its scope; failing to encompass the necessary historic ground and reruns a naive caricature that can be deployed to any previously colonised country. Casting organisations of core capitalist countries as the focal point of history and the identity of the formerly colonised to a state of perpetual victimhood. This perspective, which many left-wing commentators of Sudan hold, is due to the acceptance of a definition of colonialism that was more brutal and direct. However, colonialism in the 20th century was in the form of elite class solidarity. Elites in the Global North and South corroborated together for the exploitation of the Global South.

Although, there is a romanticisation of the revolutionary moment, it is not merely a moment, but a complex history. Analysing events in binaries, personalities and isolated moments also lends credence to reactionary revisionist narratives that would seek to attribute the current state of dismay to the revolution of 2018–2019, or actors, or ideals, even though the dynamics that led to this state of war were set in motion long before this generation of revolutionaries were born.

In this chapter, I aim to provide a more nuanced explanation of how certain dynamics play a role in the current reality in Sudan. However, these dynamics alone do not adequately explain the nature of the conflict or the ideologies that undergird them.

91 Gilbert Achcar, "Sudan's Huge Tragedy and the Way Out," *Anti-Capitalist Resistance*, 2023.

I was part of the resistance in Khartoum, and played a role in the movement that brought down the 30-year-old dictatorship of Omar al-Bashir, working both within and alongside the NRC. The complexion of the revolution was very diverse. There were disgruntled reactionary Islamists from al-Turabi's faction who split from the Bashir faction at the beginning of the century; cadres from the Sudanese Communist Parties who wanted to bring about socialism; middle school students; government employees fed up with cost of living and energy insecurities; with the vast majority being the dispossessed poor.

Without this latter group, the numbers would not have been sufficient to instigate a revolution. More importantly, analyses of the Sudanese revolution often overlook the pivotal role of this group, as the 'lumpen-proletariat' do not fit neatly into traditional theories of change. Nonetheless, no single group held a monopoly over the revolution, though the NRC directed many actions.

During the 30-year dictatorship, dissent was not tolerated and was prosecuted. If the ethnic cleansing in Darfur was under-reported in the international media, a completely fabricated narrative was propagated internally. There was no mass organising, there was no vehicle to carry proletarian demands and relay dispossessed narratives in the capital's dominating media environment, those who claimed to be political dissidents were sectarians and opportunists focusing more on retribution and vanguardism than real change. Throughout much of the 1990s, one of the more prominent dissidents was Sadiq al-Mahdi, who played a significant role in facilitating Gaddafi's transfer of weapons and support to the Arab groups in Darfur and who himself exhibited ambivalence toward the dire situations in west Sudan.

I remember one of the more powerful scenes during the revolution when a bus from Darfur arrived at the sit-in in the center of Khartoum. As we chanted around the bus, I noticed a person step out and perform two Rak'at,[92] his head to the ground, weeping, before engaging the crowd. I had never witnessed anything like this before; the masses in Khartoum broke from the norm and empathised with those from the periphery in celebration and open defiance to the racial regime. This had much to do with mass displacement of the periphery to the urban centers and the

92 **Ed. Note:** A standard format of an Islamic prayer.

blatant inequality. Flawed as it may have been, the revolution served as a moment to challenge the ideas propagated by the state and its affiliates, acting as an ideological scaffold for the dictatorship's existence. Meaning the normalisation of racialised narratives to discriminate against west Sudanese was challenged, these narratives, as we discussed, relate to class formation and hegemony creation in west Sudan.

While this is a necessary step, its motivations need to be examined. The reaction to the revolution was inevitably violent. Seeing the chaos that ensued, the question became: "was it worth it?" The answer to this is complicated and emotive. The arguments presented by the reactionary forces and elites—whose cycle of accumulation was disrupted and whose anxiety over mortality intensified—are articulated along ideologies of ownership. For these forces, allowing in the western Sudanese 'rabble' was a mistake which turned the country of Khartoum into the country of Sudan—of course seeing themselves as the *owners of belonging* to Khartoum. Simply, the definition of nationalism is the ownership of belonging. This ideology upholds and reproduces racial capitalism.

Following the war, manifestations of this nationalism were ubiquitous. Narrative shapers deploy forms of 'enemy within' propaganda, suggesting that the west Sudanese, the domestic force in Khartoum, were envious of the Khartoumites and corroborated with the RSF to destroy the capital. This inevitably led to defining belonging more stringently and racially to and by a specific group. As much as one can gauge, the spectre of fascist violence is haunting Sudan.

During the revolution, before the war, a form of liberal belonging was celebrated: multiculturalism—wherein it was suggested that west Sudanese belonged to Sudan. Analysing this narrative demonstrates its link with reactionary epistemology however, as it suggests that certain people have the power to extend belonging based on a logic of ownership. The idea that welcoming west Sudanese to the center should be celebrated is problematic; for many west Sudanese, fascist violence has always existed, and the violence of social reproduction has meant exclusion and discrimination at every level. We do not have ownership of belonging that we can extend liberally, because our belonging to a land, and the reproduction of this belonging and society, necessitate violence towards west Sudanese.

The moment where the bus from Darfur reached the sit-in was indeed euphoric, but much of the liberal logic that informed our euphoria shares similar foundations to the violence of social reproduction. There needs to be a decentralisation and with it a new conception of belonging that is not based on capitalist property relations of ownership. This is the only way to tackle, at the root, the fascist violence of social reproduction.

The current violent rhetoric towards the west Sudanese is not just fueled by reactionary ideas but also the new racial regime. West Sudanese, because of their dispossession since the Nimeiry government and beyond, are forced to work as so-called 'unskilled workers' in Khartoum and other capital cities. They labour in construction jobs, as petty traders, domestic workers, etc., existing as an underclass for the residents of the capitals. When the conflict erupted in the capital cities, many wealthy families managed to escape to their relatives in peripheral areas or other urban centers, if not leaving the country entirely. Those who could not flee were the domestic underclass in the capital cities who served as the primary source of income for their families in the periphery—or lacked the means to flee (or even to sustain themselves).

When the RSF took control of the capital cities, the underclass was inevitably forced to co-exist with them. They suffered the worst repercussions of the civil war. The dispossessed again found themselves at the whims of mercenaries who exacted unparalleled violence upon them.[93] They have no loyalty to their now-fled masters who, at best, regarded the underclass as faceless peons to fulfill a certain liberal ethic for moral gratification (such as donating used clothes, as if the cotton harvested by these families had not been appropriated as raw material and transformed into fabric elsewhere in the name of modernisation). Part of this liberal ethic is the celebration of aforementioned multiculturalism. This underclass now lives in a state of fear and violence alongside the RSF. The Sudanese military began to dissect Sudan into areas controlled by the army and those controlled by the RSF. Following attempts to cut telecommunication, electricity and supply lines, RSF areas started to rely on satellite technology for internet access provided by Elon Musk's Starlink.[94]

93 Nils Adler and Dallia M. Abdelmoniem, "'Don't Let the Other Soldiers Watch': Rape as a Weapon of War in Sudan," *Al Jazeera*, 2023.

94 Thomas Grove, Nicholas Bariyo, Micah Maidenberg, Emma Scott, and Ian Lovett, "The Black Market That Delivers Elon Musk's Starlink to U.S. Foes," *Wall Street*

There is a danger of designating the RSF as evil and the army as moral, as this perspective reinforces a narrative that categorises all individuals in certain regions as bad and others as virtuous, strengthening the reactionary rhetoric. More importantly, it dissolves any nuance and context that facilitated bringing about this reality. There are cultural war narratives that are surfacing now that suggest that those west Sudanese who are coexisting with the RSF are corroborators who were planted by the RSF to infiltrate Khartoum, and that this conspiracy was long in the making. Such fascist claims, which stem from the policies of successive governments that promoted segregation in the west and exploited ethnic division, have been emboldened by a Manichean binary approach to understanding the present circumstances.

It is more accurate to suggest, as I have demonstrated, that this particular process of social reproduction was instigated by Nimeiry's government that put in motion financialisation, service economies, raw material export and franchise import practices, debilitated unions, etc. that were then further intensified by al-Bashir and al-Turabi's dictatorship. This new modus operandi permeated the military structure, leading to the creation of the Janjaweed as a direct result of subsidising violence through the empowerment of Arab supremacy and supremacists in Darfur. They were rewarded for quashing the African groups in fear of a repeat of the successful rebellion seen in South Sudan. The Manichean binary that exists today reinforces the racialised dynamics that fostered Arab supremacy in the west, and with it the RSF. It is inaccurate to treat the two warring factions as separate entities—rather, one is a subsidiary of the other.

There will be a counterrevolution—one that is currently underway but underreported—that will reaffirm the racist narrative of west Sudanese as infiltrators who have conspired because of the state of their region. This is where the spectre of fascism lingers. The culture that comes with financialisation is an atomised one which seeks to blame one's woes not so much on structure but on personal choice. Individual choice is now being lauded by the reactionaries as the reason for the destruction of west Sudan in a fascistical way. Some argue that their culture is one of neglect, while others, citing a lack of education, suggest that jealousy

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Journal, 2024.

motivated west Sudanese to conspire against Khartoum and other capital cities.

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During our protests, we would march to the Republic's Palace, crossing Zubeir Pasha Street in central Khartoum on our way, named after the aforementioned slaver who first collaborated with the Turko-Egyptian administration to include west Sudan into the territory of Sudan. The irony was not lost on some. For many—those who lived under a regime that for 30 years projected an image of west Sudan as dangerous, complicated and savage—there lingered a woeful unawareness of the intimate details of the catastrophes that were inflicted on Darfur.

While I understand those well-intended who focus on the antagonists/protagonists divide, the Sudanese revolution of 2019 was a continuation of the irrational revolution, which was Khartoum-centric and did not address conceptions of capitalist property relations or injustices that affected all. The revolution of 2018–19 was a resurgent moment for the irrational revolution, contradictorily articulated through nationalism, not unlike 1924. The complexion of the 1924 revolution was the most profound expression of competing universalising ideologies to British colonialism that corresponded with the incubation of Sudanese nationalism. That revolution was also crushed, along with all the institutions that galvanised the protesters, mainly educational institutes (see Part I).

For us, the revolution was quickly usurped by reactionary forces who found an opportunity to further their interests in this revolution. Those who usurped the revolution and took advantage of the competing universalising claims such as "freedom, peace, and justice" were not only the international community—through economic restructuring—and the political class of Sudan—through certain conceptions of nationalism—but also the UAE—through circuits of accumulation.

Many have written about the UAE's exploitation of the crisis in Sudan to extract gold. Adam Hanieh authored an exceptional book detailing how the Gulf countries have become a hub of capital accumulation in

the Middle East and North Africa.[95] He encourages readers to go beyond Rentier State Theory (RST), and highlights the processes of accumulation. Hanieh convincingly demonstrates that it is not just that Gulf states were 'lucky' enough to discover oil; rather, it is the exploitation of the precarious migrant labourers through the Kafala system, the access to foreign markets, the privatisation of public utilities, and the support of Western power, among other factors, that have bolstered the Gulf economies.

When abstracted, Hanieh's thesis can better inform our understanding of the exploitative relationship between the UAE and Sudan. Many hold the position that all the areas rich in natural materials in the world can thrive solely due to their access to these resources. This claim has no basis in reality. It conforms to an idealised market logic that fails to consider the dispossession and exploitation necessary for production, it conflates the meaning of value and price, it does not take into account the effects it has on the social relations, among many other factors. For our purposes, the notion that Sudan only requires gold to thrive and that it is the UAE and Hemedti that are forcefully extracting it from the people, play two important ideological roles.

1. It strengthens the nationalistic impulse that seeks to cast those who would otherwise benefit from gold mining (and other exploitative activity), namely capitalists, as victims.

2. It casts Hemedti and the UAE in the archetypal colonialist role.

As was the case with the grain barons during Nimeiry's time, those who were dispossessed were the farmers whose livelihoods were destroyed by national capitalists who exploited the circuit of accumulation concentrated in Gulf countries. With the rarest of exceptions, the wealthy in Khartoum have taken advantage of and contributed to the exploitative relationship between Sudan and the Gulf countries long before Hemedti. Whether it involved the capitalist classes in Sudan or the UAE, the dispossessed individuals are the marginalised farmers and labourers across Sudan. To suggest that this colonial relationship started with Hemedti and the rulers of Dubai is an unserious claim, that over-

95 See Adam Hanieh, *Money, Markets, and Monarchies: The Gulf Cooperation Council and the Political Economy of the Contemporary Middle East* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

looks the longstanding practices between the capitalist class in Sudan and the wider Middle East.

To dislodge these unserious claims suggesting that the status quo before the civil war was not as exploitative as is today, a thorough examination of history needs to take place. Starting with the role that successive governments and elites played in centering Khartoum as the hub of accumulation, while dispossessing and exploiting farmers and the periphery. Before the current civil war, cattle, cattle feed, sugar, cotton, gold, and the profits generated from these industries flowed to the Gulf without any significant popular critique. In addition, due to remittances sent back by professional migrant labour to the Gulf, there was, and still is, a positive social status of those professional migrants, which places the Gulf countries in the minds of the aspirational as a utopia.

There was a plan to build a new private port funded by Sudan's wealthiest man and the UAE, that was even lauded by many. Hemedti happens to be a member of the new capitalist classes of Sudan that, following the tradition of exploiting labourers, destroy the means to reproduce themselves and export the raw material to the detriment of the environment, the labour force and the economy, all while ensuring Sudan and Khartoum are absolutely segregated.

For those who lived through the exploitation of Sudan in contemporary history, or those who have read about it, it is evident that the subsidisation of defence to private militias was widely practised. Al-Turabi's NIF was willing to undermine the military and recruit the sons of the poor to the PDF to fight against South Sudanese rebels. The reactionary Islamists did this to ensure they had a militia that was ideological loyal to them. Furthermore, the National Intelligence and Secret Service (NISS) essentially functioned as a competing military force to the army with extrajudicial privileges that served the benefit of the upper echelons of the dictatorship. There were even individuals within the inner circles of the dictatorship who maintained their private militias, most notoriously, Nafie Ali Nafie and Salah Gosh. All of these militias, without exception, exploited their extrajudicial powers to profit from land and labour. Furthermore, all these elites had direct ties with Gulf circuits of accumulation.

In fact, leading scholars on Sudan suggest that al-Turabi's relation-

ship with the Gulf was instrumental in the success of his NIF and organisations associated with it through Gulf financing through banks such as Faisal Islamic Bank.[96] All this while the army syphons money from the public purse, through import tax for example, to accumulate wealth at the top of the army echelon. All are in the business of plunder.

All this is to say that the arguments seeking to displace the blame onto external entities in order to maintain the image of a pristine innocent native Sudanese who happen to be at the whims of the international organisations and the army, is not accurate. Such narratives allow the elites, who benefit from them, to evade responsibility. The farming and labour classes in Sudan have been exploited majorly at the hands of Sudanese elites long before Burhan or Hemedti. It is important to highlight this, as nationalism is often employed to defend the rich, to suggest that all Sudanese are one, and that it is the non-Sudanese that have exploited Sudan—some even claim that Hemedti is not really Sudanese. The stark reality is that exploitation is done by the wealthy, regardless of nationality (many of those wealthy Sudanese don't reside in Sudan).

That being said, it is important to understand the role of the UAE in the current moment, which needs to be fought and even challenged violently. But the fight does not end there, it continues to all those who have amassed wealth at the expense of the exploited, due to their practices of raw material export and service import. Those who took advantage of land reform to favour the rich, and government acts to promote direct investment. The battle persists against the state that has facilitated these circuits of accumulation.

Change

In Part IV, titled 'On Society', I will present a general theory of change. However, in this chapter, I would like to put forth suggestions on what actions should be taken, informed by the current situation and history.

Firstly, Burhan should be replaced with an internal army vote. The votes of the low ranking army cadres must be included. I emphasise the army because it is currently the site of the most evident and pressing

96 Collins, *A History of Modern Sudan*, 149; Berridge, *Hasan al-Turabi*, 65.

contradiction: the privatisation of defence. Much of the army cadres are disgruntled about having a competing militia to the army. Historically they have also been disturbed by the PDF and NISS as the ability and credibility of the national army waned. This sentiment must be articulated and understood, as it has more to do with financialisation than who is personally in charge of the army. In that spirit, this transformation should encourage a move from the current privatisation and financialisation dynamic, and restructuring along industrialisation, nationalisation and democratising dynamics, not just in the army but in other realms of public life. Such proposals should be championed by grassroots movements such as the NRC among others in the periphery.

Strategically, the army has struggled to fend off the RSF and lacks the unquestionable support of the people. The support of the army is conditional on defeating the RSF. Only a radical shift towards nationalisation can reinvigorate the support necessary for dismantling the RSF and other militias brought about through privatisation. The army under al-Bashir has de-weaponised the west and expelled many westerners from the army. This needs to be reversed. However, the overconcentration on personalities in the discourse has poisoned discussions about Sudan, and currently acts as an ideological barrier to addressing historical dynamics. This state of affairs will not improve without a radical shift in the social, political, and defense dynamics.

The focus on change stemming from the army is not due to a misconception about the army's role regarding nation-formation, or a particular affinity for a national army, or a misguided understanding of 'the dictatorship of the proletariat.' Rather, it is currently the only organisation that has the ability to consequently change the trajectory of the war, and intervene against the RSF in west Sudan. Additionally, this organisation has not always functioned as a private entity; it views itself as the ultimate expression of paternalistic nationalism, which must be addressed during the course of democratic transformation. In this context, I believe ideological efforts to convert the defence sector from private practices are more feasible and urgent than the production sector.

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I would like to reiterate my conclusion from Part I of these reflections: the capital should be moved to west Sudan, and power should be devolved from Khartoum. Nimeiry's government, in 1980, planned to give the five regions of north Sudan autonomy, but the initiative failed. Nimeiry's government failed for historic reasons and also for the deep dependence on Khartoum as a hub of accumulation. We are now faced with a new reality in which Khartoum is currently destabilised, which presents an opportunity. The dependence is forcefully severed. Relocating the capital to the west will come with its challenges, and violence, however, it will force the locus of meaning to shift. There is no singular solution to Sudan's issues. Nevertheless, if we consider the exploitation of the dispossessed to be what drives our actions and impetus for change, and not just the self-interested impulse to perpetuate our existence within an unequal society, then we must encourage revolutionary emergence from the current moment.

I mention these desperately missing above-mentioned histories from most analyses of Sudan because without it there is a failure to understand what is required for change. I aim to dispel the shallow Manechean good versus evil, which only leads to furthering the current crisis and historic cycles of exploitation. Fundamentally, how Khartoum has been reproduced since the early 19th century has been at the expense of the rest of Sudan. Any hopeful future for the country must confront this fact.

These reflections should be seen as a step toward addressing this reckoning. Furthermore, it should encourage those of us dedicated to challenging the normalised state of inequality to go beyond the nationalistic sentiments often employed to support the wealthy's petulant, narcissistic, grandiose ideas of how society should be. We must imagine how it is for those who have never gained 'independence' from exploitative powers, those whose exploitation goes unnoticed and is instead normalised by ludicrous claims such as "that is just in their culture." We must shift our focus away from the elites of Khartoum and direct our attention toward the periphery.

As for us communists, we cannot reserve ourselves to the academic chamber and discussion panels, or seclude ourselves behind the technocratic veil of professionalism. There is no communism without the exploited. We will not see communism in our lifetimes and, as such, to be a

communist is simultaneously to be steadfast in your violence in the face of the moment; to be informed by the past and to be a martyr for the future. God willing, today's dispossessed will be tomorrow's custodians of the world.

Part IV

On Society

As mentioned in the previous section, the dynamics of financialisation were intensified by Nimeiry, through privatising and subsidising. This practice was continued by al-Turabi and al-Bashir through the PDF and later was the impetus for supporting and financing Arab supremacist militias to quash any dissent in western Sudan and, subsequently, in Khartoum. This culminated in the establishment of the RSF.

The subsidisation of violence by the state to private security is a topic discussed by Claire Provost and Matt Kennard in their book *Silent Coup*. The book provides, in chilling detail, the lengths to which states have gone to accommodate corporations at the expense of their citizens. Regarding the subsidisation of violence, the chapter about "Private Protection" stands out. In this chapter, the author, citing Peter Singer, suggests that Max Weber's conception of the state as having a monopoly over legal violence within a territory is no longer adequate to explain the current moment.[97] The main reason being that at the time of Weber's writing, World War I, mercenary forces were becoming irrelevant whereas national armies were a significant feature of war. This, however, was not the case in the 19th century, nor the era of decolonisation.

The case of Sudan illustrates that Weber was only partially and coincidentally correct in asserting that the state is the entity that monopolises violence. Arguably, since the beginning of al-Bashir's regime, the monopoly of violence was not centralised or monopolised by one group—the national army. Al-Bashir's dictatorship started with al-Turabi subsidising the war against the South Sudanese liberation force to the PDF, aided by Gulf money and support from Gaddafi. Since then, there has been no absolute monopoly of power; instead, a cautious harmony between the military, the secret services, and various paramilitary groups, not to mention the interference of Gaddafi and the Gulf countries. This harmony erupted into the current civil war, but it cannot be said that the military had a monopoly over violence within Sudan during the Bashir years, not

97 Claire Provost and Matt Kennard, *Silent Coup: How Corporations Overthrew Democracy* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023), 205.

even legally as the NISS had extrajudicial powers. Yet Sudan was and is a state.

I would like to challenge Weber's definition of the state, not only in the context of contemporary regimes of privatisation and financialisation, but also by asserting that his theory was always a mid-range theory that lacks a grand, general or totalising structure.

Weber's definition of a state is widely referenced; he asserts "Today, however, we have to say that a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory."[98] In that same lecture, Weber explains that the state "Like the political institutions historically preceding it", is a relation "of men dominating men" through legitimate means, somewhat conforming to the Hobbesian notion of constant war. He then expresses that man's motivation to obey this legitimacy, their internal justification and external means, are; firstly, "the authority of the 'eternal yesterday'", i.e. traditional dominance, such as patriarchy. Secondly, the "gift of grace", i.e. charisma. Finally, rationally created rules, i.e. legality. The lecture is eclectic and explores themes such as journalism, American, English and German politics, claims about the particularity of occident politics, Gentlemen politics, the psychology of politicians, etc.[99]

Weber's descriptions, while extensive, fail to adequately address the structural and ideological issues with the formation of the state, in that there are more words dedicated to the obedience of state violence based on speculative ideals than there are to the historiography of state violence. Crucially, there is a lack of a convincing articulation regarding the ideological claims to violence, and the processes that (re)produce this violence. Superficially and abstractly, one might assert that a characteristic of modern states is the monopolisation of violence; however, this does not *define* a modern state. This statement follows a tautological logic of a state as an organ that actualises assumptions about human nature, society and land.

Modern states try to *universalise* values. These values are ideologically defined by assumptions about human nature, society and land. These assumptions are driven by an *anxiety of death* of the social processes that

98 Max Weber, *Politics as a Vocation* (Fortress Press, 1965), 2.

99 *Ibid.*, 2.

reproduces society, that today operates a stratification and commercial dependence regime. The problem is that these assumptions are ideals that have emerged alongside the modern state to justify the modern state and are unsubstantiable. In fact, their substantialisation requires violence, not only from the state but elsewhere to actualise these suppositions—Part II provides examples of extra-state violence, to uphold ideals about human nature reinforced by the state. To briefly summarise just some of these suppositions, we need to look into the philosophic claims made by champions of modern political theory.

Jeremy Bentham's ontology of fiction, which underpins the concept of the panopticon, expresses values defined by certain suppositions. For Bentham, it is morally reprehensible that any person be tortured, however, if one were to be tortured it needs to be in order to set an example.[100] The aim of a panopticon, or a spectacle of torture, is not the victim of the crime but the spectatorship of the act itself. Thomas Hobbes posited that without a state to keep citizens in check, a state-of-nature would arise and with it a war of all against all. To avert this chaos, citizens should obey the authority, through a social contract, even if it is inconvenient to keep the state of barbarity at bay. John Locke, as previously mentioned, argued that land should be owned and utilised by those with an industrial spirit so that it is not *wasted*, even the competing relationships to property are determined by waste and improvement.

These assumptions about man, society and land are artificially constructed. For Bentham, it is the supposition of a spectacle of torture that would drive people to obey.[101] For Hobbes, it is the supposition of a brutish state of nature—something which society should avoid. For Locke, it is the potential waste that would come about had land and relationship to property not been processed in a certain way. These utilitarian claims are the ideological infrastructure that undergirds the violence present in contemporary society, including the modern state.

In this context, Weber is only correct if he suggests that modern states require different forms of violence to establish and ensure their continuity. Even then, this violence would not be monopolised, it would be dispersed, saturated, interconnected, and in some cases, contradictory.

100 Jeremy Bentham, *The Panopticon Writings* (Verso Books, 2011), 6.

101 *Ibid*., 6.

There are numerous forms of social reproduction, through various expressions of violence, that may not be state-sponsored. The above-mentioned case studies from Part II demonstrate this point clearly. It is true that the state is one form that facilitates the universalisation of assumptions through violence.[102]

Man is not inherently brutish and this violence is not an intrinsic aspect of human nature, rather the coming about of the modern state requires a naturalisation of assumptions and structures that require violence for their creation and to legitimate them, and this violence is not monopolised. However, the state does represent the most disciplined form of violence. What may be termed *incumbent violence*. I would add that one of the *defining* characteristics of a modern state is its ability to discipline and institutionalise historical ruptures through periodic elections, so as to naturalistically deny emergence from established social and psychological reproduction. Liberal democracy is incumbent violence.

A historiographical question arises here, which is what came first: the ideological infrastructure (suppositions) or the state (violence)? This question is best attempted philosophically, not historically; what is the

102 The violence that the state facilitates to universalise suppositions about man, society and land is (re)produced by professionally divided labour. This violence plays a substantive role in hegemonising the professional division of labour along the waste and improvement paradigm. Those (advocates for) professionally divided labour, for example doctors (or petit bourgeois), play a paramount role, not just in the professional material division of labour (and time, and space), but the professional ideological division of labour (and time, and space). The doctor I mentioned at the top of the previous part represents this resolutely. As professionally divided labour, she has ideologically naturalised the concept of waste and improvement with the help of the pre-existing processes she was reproduced under, namely the academy; whereby in the midst of revolution, she has identified the rough sleepers as waste. Professional here refers to the universalisation of improvement, facilitated by the academy, the academy legitimated by the state, the state is legitimated through violence to substantiate the suppositions of man, society and land. It is not just the state that employs structural and ideological violence to universalise claims, but also professionally divided labour. It is sometimes claimed that the rise of fascism follows from the rise of left-wing politics, through the petit bourgeois or middle class, this may be historically true, however, theoretically, violence already exists within those professionals who have naturalised the concept of improvement and waste. This naturalisation of violence, I speculate, is one reason why it is difficult to articulate an agreed upon definition of class, especially as it relates to a revolutionary force, whether bourgeois or proletariat.

relationship between idea and matter, if any? This question has a long history both in theology and philosophy, the scope of which exceeds this piece, but the question is one that is immediately relevant to us. The answer to this question provides the foundation of a theory of change. If ideas supersedes matter, (class) consciousness takes precedence over direct violent action, suggesting that our efforts should focus on a form of revolutionary *Dawah,* i.e. building institutions. However, if material conditions supersede ideas, then confrontational violence is the priority; to force a new reality that would generate new ideas, i.e. destroying institutions.

Attempts to answer these questions are historically contextual. Today, there is more emphasis on raising (class) consciousness among people, than direct and violent action. There are many reasons for this, including the decline of organised labour, the dissolution of the USSR, the domestication, professionalisation, and institutionalisation of activism in the academy, media, parliament and NGO sector, the fragmentation of struggle caused by discourse politics and mass social media, etc. Today, many activist groups organise along 'raising class consciousness' lines, with a focus on the academy, to prepare for moments of ruptures, i.e. election cycles, revolution, political and trade union appointments, etc.

The issue with this formulation is that it relies on a linear development of consciousness of ideas, which is also substantiated ideologically. It is substantiated with a paternalistic undertone, where the exploitation of workers is felt, but cannot be articulated due to the ideological naturalisation of capitalism—i.e. division and competition of labour, alienation, divisive managerialism, class betrayal, ambition, self-interest, among others. Due to this, a clarification is necessary for overcoming the ideological naturalisation of capitalism through raising (class) consciousness. This clarification is undertaken by cadres of the intelligentsia because they possess a clear understanding of material reality, now that these cadres have 'raised' their consciousness to demystify ideological naturalisation. This class consciousness is ideological because it is premised on the belief that there is a linear trajectory to knowledge production and a universal *conscious* truth, and cadres are elevated to a higher plane due to vaguely defined notions of consciousness. Knowledge production, vis-à-vis science, is a social activity that does not determine a pre-existing reality.

This Messianic activism (i.e. vanguardism), to the general public (the unconverted, so to speak) is thoroughly unconvincing, patronising and unappealing, and does not have much cache outside the academy, because the academy's raison d'être is the *enclosure* of the social activity of science. The academy serves as a nexus of *improvement*, where any professionally divided labour needs to attend the academy, and is equipped with usurpation power of any type of knowledge production; for instance, a doctor possesses the authority over care labour due to the ideological *improvement* of their labour that gives a certain form of ownership over care labour. There is substantial scientific activity occurring among midwives, domestic workers, car cleaners, construction labourers, artists, drug users, and at the 'interstices of revolution' etc. that is social, and this fact of reality is denied by the enclosure of knowledge production by the academy.

It must be emphasised that what is produced by the practice of science is a construal of a pre-existing reality, not a reality. Midwives, through their everyday work caring for newborns, might develop a practical understanding of how body and mind relate—simply by observing early self-awareness in infants. This does not define the true nature of the mind-body relationship; rather, it is an interpretation that is continually refined and laboured to reproduce an already existing mind-body dynamic. More importantly, the knowledge produced in midwifery about mind-body is important for care *labour*, in the reproduction of an actual mind-body. Which is how we reproduce an already existing reality, that we may never be able to know.

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Contrary to Messianic activism, there are those whose actions are based on the belief that matter supersedes ideas, and that violence is necessary to create a new reality, with that new reality, new ideas would follow. This mode was widely practised throughout the 20th century for many reasons. Paramount among them was the wave of anti-colonial and liberation movements throughout the world, some supported by the USSR, coinciding with the decline of the British and French empires. The driving force behind this mode of practice is the oppressive weight of colonialism, which was justified with violent ideologies and structures that

denied the existence of colonised people beyond disposable subjects. When subjects attempted to engage with ideas and dialogue, they would be dismissed or crushed. As in the case of Sudan, where, following the 1924 uprising which non-violently called for autonomy, the British colonial administration responded by cracking down on education and the intelligentsia.

For many colonised peoples, the only recourse was violence. Today, we commemorate these revolutions and struggles for liberation and equality because much has been sacrificed. We also honor these struggles simply because we have little left of them, eternalised in symbols etched into paraphernalia that are repurposed for commercial reproduction. These commercialised items are emblematic of a critical issue: the commitment to materiality over ideas and trying to violently force a new reality, in the hope that new ideas would follow. That is that the ideologies underpinning the reproduction of capitalism seems to persist after the violence. Fanon cautioned about the moment following the revolution and how the national bourgeoisie could betray the revolutionary cause. He wrote

> In an under-developed country an authentic national middle class ought to consider as its bounden duty to betray the calling fate has marked out for it, and to put itself to school with the people: in other words to put at the people's disposal the intellectual and technical capital that it has snatched when going through the colonial universities. But unhappily we shall see that very often the national middle class does not follow this heroic, positive, fruitful and just path; rather, it disappears with its soul set at peace into the shocking ways—shocking because anti-national—of a traditional bourgeoisie, of a bourgeoisie which is stupidly, contemptibly, cynically bourgeois.[103]

103 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 150. In this informative passage, Fanon follows a typical logic of those who have naturalised the ideologies of the academy, in which they believe that those academically educated are well suited to manage the affairs of a people. This technocratic view has proven to be time and again fatal for revolutions, not merely because of class interest and consciousness of a class (bourgeois), but because of the naturalisation of suppositions about man, society and land that are articulated along the waste and improvement paradigm systemically engendered to reproduce one's self according to ideas of improvement incubated in the academy. The Sudanese revolution of 2018–19 was usurped by this technocratic thinking, facilitated by then technocratic prime minister Abdalla Hamdok. We saw the same happening with the Bangladeshi July Revolution of 2024 with Muhammad Yunus as the technocrat.

Subsequently, following the violence of liberation movements and struggles, the new material reality did not replace the ideological naturalisation of capitalism. The reason for this, as previously mentioned, is that human perception of reality does not dictate reality itself. This means that while man reproduces society he has no control over society, and cannot produce a new society through will. Not simply because of an ideological commitment that one man or event can't shape the course of history, but because man does not have access to the reality that they reproduce. So to claim that now the defeat of colonialism is going to bring about a new mode of social reproduction does not take into account the limitation of man's control over social reproduction.

This notwithstanding, anticolonial force was necessary but not sufficient to supplant capitalism; the case of Darfur or South Sudan demonstrates this. Anti-colonialism was essential for Sudanese independence, but did not guarantee liberation for all. In fact, capitalism ideologically and structurally, continues uninterrupted after independence. Simply put, what was won in independence is the equal opportunity to exploit land and labour by a certain subject, under a new racial regime, but there was no fundamental change in the mode of social reproduction.

That being said, it is important to assert that violence was necessary under the colonial conditions, just as Messianic activism may have been essential in contexts of defeat and the triumph of capitalism. In fact, violence played a crucial role in the anti-colonial struggle, without which territorial independence would not have been achievable for the colonies or national liberation, though not for all. Similarly, today it is difficult to imagine the significance of Bernie Sanders and Jeremy Corbyn without youth and university organising. However, both forms have failed to achieve lasting consequently significant political aims, or substantiate the implicit philosophical claims that underlay the two forms relating to idea and matter, i.e. ideas supersede matter.

The failures of various liberation and organisation projects can be accurately attributed to factors such as institutional bias, the manufacturing of consent, political assassinations, lobbying, ideological hegemony, CIA coups, etc. Explaining these failures does not resolve the philosophical question, it creates an impasse and reinvigorates the same philosophical question relating to matter and ideas. Sudan gained independence

70 years ago, however it is still tied to debt obligations compounded by interest, and the situation for the labour force, and the general populace, has declined in recent years. We have violently ousted our dictators only to replace them with new ones. Not only are the philosophical questions never resolved, but they are also perpetuated, and the answers to these questions are similarly reproduced.

In America, following the defeat of the organised Left, which culminated in the Democratic Party's usurpation of Sanders' nomination, a debate within the Left continued; whether or not to support a Democratic nominee to stop the ascendency of Trump to The Oval Office. History is peppered with acquiescence of the organised Left to the establishment—whether trade unions, or communist and socialist parties. Activism finds itself in that implicit philosophical impasse, caught between the supersession of ideas, i.e. creating counter ideological infrastructure to raise (class) consciousness; or the supersession of matter, i.e. destroying institutions deemed unfit for purpose, with the belief that their collapse will pave the way for new ideas.

In America, these positions are aptly illustrated in the debate between Noam Chomsky and Briahna Joy Gray.[104] It was also profoundly articulated in the choice between violence (undecided/third party) and consciousness (Kamala Harris). In America, this philosophical question is persistently addressed with acquiescence due to the institutionalisation of historic rupture through periodic elections— 'democracy'.

It is also true that these positions have a negative aspect. For those who believe that matter supersedes ideas, some choose violence to destroy the established systems, but most become disillusioned and retire to their pessimism. Conversely, for those who believe that ideas supersede matter, while some may choose to engage in revolutionary *Dawah*, many withdraw into social bubbles that conform to their biases which, overtime, become increasingly conservative.

This tension between consciousness and violence is one that all political actors encounter, not just the Left-wing intelligentsia under capitalism, but political practice in general—i.e. Plato, Ibn Rushd, Gramsci etc. This question occupied much of our theorising during the Sudanese revolution, in various forms and at different levels. Similar to the debates occurring in

104 *Bad Faith,* "Chomsky Debate Video," November 3, 2020.

America, a profound articulation of the different positions in the debate can be found between us, the revolutionaries, and the organised anti-dictatorship movement, the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC).

After al-Bashir's ousting, the question of democratic transition became a central topic of discussion. Some factions within the FFC decided to extend the period of democratic transition so that the forces that wielded power during al-Bashir years didn't outright win the elections due to their alliances and imposed common sense, not to mention command over social and state structures. This concern was not entirely unfounded; in fact, a short transition period was considered one of the major mistakes of the October 1964 revolution. During that time, sectarian groups were able to undermine the democratic transition by protesting the perceived inefficacy of the interim government. The FFC calculated that the revolution was not enough to change minds, i.e. the violence of revolution that brings with it a new reality, will not bring about new ideas. Instead, they believed it was essential to change prevailing ideas—what they referred to as the revolution could be completed. This amounted to petty squabbles and ideologically motivated expropriation of land, private enterprise and wealth, and a prolonged transition period. This was a costly decision.

Most of us in the streets were under 30 years of age, meaning we were younger than the dictatorship of al-Bashir. We perceived the dictatorship as all-encompassing and absolute; its downfall was mythical. For us, the collapse of the regime infused the revolution with a sense of glory. We believed that the revolution unleashed burgeoning ideas that were restricted by the fallen regime. One such idea was a particular conception of liberatory nationalism. It was accepted that this moment of revolutionary violence was to be followed by revolutionary ideas and consciousness. In fact, this was one of the main motivations for not aligning with any political parties, because they were perceived as part of a tainted pre-revolutionary past. Now that the revolution had taken place, we would not rely on traditional politics because a new consciousness had taken root. Many revolutionaries, myself included, even dubbed this the 'the revolution of consciousness'. This was not the case. As mentioned in Part I, the NRC could not demand basic services and needs for their neighbourhoods; this revolutionary body quickly met the limits of ideas imposed by matter. In reality, the revolution was completely usurped.

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Here, I attempt a resolution to this duality between matter and ideas, particularly in relation to consciousness and violence, in an effort to answer the question of which supersedes the other: ideas or matter?

Reality exists independently and is not determined by or reliant on our interpretations or experiments. This means two things; firstly, we can practise countless experiments on reality, yet we may never fully comprehend it. Second, different construals of reality do not have the same epistemic weight, that is, while the social practice of science about reality may vary depending on social context, not all knowledge of reality is equally true of reality because reality is not a construct of our scientific endeavors. The significance then is not on knowledge *of* reality but our relationship *to* reality. This relationship is mitigated through labour.

From this, I would like to assert that while ideas and matter are distinct, it is labour that unites the two. In fact, labour can be defined as the synthesis of ideas and matter. Labour is the unique value that distinguishes humanity from all other entities in the known universe. This ontological leap is not limited to individuals, but extends to the collective society of individuals. The labour of man is limited by material and ideas of and about reality. This confinement of labour is known as *society*. Consequently, society extends only to the limits of man's labour, this labour is the congealment of ideas and matter. In turn, the labour of man not only reproduces material society, it also generates ideas about society.

This is why there are similar interpretations of society in the works of Jeremy Bentham and Islamic scholars talking about *i'bra ,* or Hobbes and Salafists regarding obedience and authority, despite their alignment with completely different intellectual traditions. Or materially, for example, the same practices of labour exploitation through migration policy done by Saudi Arabia under the Kafala system, was and is practised in Germany through what the Nazis called *Fremdarbeiter*, or what is referred to more recently as *Gastarbeiter;*[105] even as economists propose distinct

105 It must be said that this last point demonstrates the poverty of international law, where categories do not exist to address the inequalities done to labour, instead

development models for the two countries; whether rentier state theory for Saudi Arabian development or Germany as an 'elevator society.'

Matter, being distinct from ideas, suggests that the essence of matter may not be fully understood through conceptual frameworks. Although ideas do not determine reality, ideas about reality are how we reproduce social reality (society) unintentionally. These ideas are conceived out of labouring to unintentionally reproduce society. This is straightforwardly true, man cannot bring about the socialist revolution by having ideas about the socialist revolution. In fact, it is impossible to conceive of a notion of a socialist revolution that is entirely divorced from the immediate context of social reproduction.

These points are crucial to understanding the flaws in conceptualising ideas and matter through the methodologies of science critiqued in Part II. Classical empiricism may assert that if the conditions are appropriate, one may construct an experiment that provides access to the reality of matter. It then becomes uncontroversial to state that the constant experimentation would enrich our understanding of reality. However, the abstraction of a reality through controlled conditions does not determine reality. These controlled experiments determine an abstract constructed reality, not reality as such but an ideal reality. The assertion that experimentation enriches our understanding of reality, what this scientific method does is generate claims about reality based on various abstractions or controlled conditions, situated in the specific social reproduction. For the classic empiricist then, reality exists in our experimentation of it, or put differently, we will be able to understand reality in the future. This is a transcendental claim, which is absurd, as reality is not contingent upon humanity; nature's continued existence does not depend on human existence. It is also equally absurd to suggest, as some traditions do, that reality is made up of the infinite complexion of human experiences. At its extremes, this is equivalent to solipsism.

Returning back to labour, as it relates to the congealment of idea and matter. The congealment of matter and ideas go beyond the under-

prioritising conceptions of belonging along nationalist lines. It is now well documented that migrant labourers in Saudi and Germany have contributed significantly to the wealth of both nations, yet they are not entitled to belong to the society they have built. In my opinion, this is normalising a form of apartheid—the closest legal description—in favour of the nationalism paradigm.

standing of labour as defined under capitalism, or labour in relation to exchange, gift-debt, or surplus. Labour also manifests in a state of metabolism; it occurs during moments of introspection, in dialogue, and in states of rest and stasis. Consequently, the definition of labour is expansive, which may be a controversial claim. I would add that while labour encompasses a wide range of activities, there are two fundamental classes of labour; that is *social labour* and *proprietary labour*.

It is important to note that an expansive definition of labour may blur the traditional distinctions between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. In which the former is dependent on wage labour for subsistence, while the latter expropriates the surplus, and it is the proletariat's labour that shapes and reproduces society. The broadening of the definition of labour in this text suggests that what is classically known as the bourgeoisie also engages in labour to reproduce society and shapes the world. The expansion of the definition of labour is also the expansion of the expropriation of labour extending beyond the economic.

Social labour refers to work performed for social reproduction and is itself social at different levels of operation. Proprietary labour is labour that tries to demand ownership and enclose social labour, this labour is the foundation of class society. The former is concerned with the ultimate preservation of the social, while the latter relates to the ultimate preservation of individual self-interest. Although there are clear economic distinctions between the two, there are also social and psychological distinctions. Part II of these reflections illustrates the psychological exploitation of social labour.

In addressing the question of whether matter or idea supersedes the other, it is essential to understand the relationship between ideas and matter not as a naturally hierarchical one, where one dominates the other, but rather a dialectical relationship in which labour plays a significant role in resolving the duality. Here, labour refers to many activities and demarcates the boundaries of society. From this a praxis must be cultivated, a practical politics that is founded on this definition of labour and does not automatically regress into the idea-versus-matter debate.

Understanding that labour is expansive and essential for the reproduction of society implies that every interaction between labour and reproduction represents a potential point of emergence. What is meant by

this is labour that is revolutionary can happen at any level of metabolism between labour and reproduction. The labour that fosters emergence is contingent upon its relevance to the reality of the matter of society. Meaning revolutionary labour is inherently challenging and may only coincidentally lead to revolution. Philosophically speaking, society and man are ontologically separate. This is why it is notoriously difficult to predict revolutions and their trajectory.

This theory of change posits that labour—specifically political action—should not be selective; instead, it should be informed by the imminent moment of reproduction. The institutionalisation of historic rupture, particularly through periodic elections, becomes only a minor aspect of revolutionary labour. This is because elections do not shape society; it is now widely accepted that liberal democracy does not bring about transformation within society, and that capitalism, as a system, is incompatible with true democracy. Consequently, revolutionary potential is almost everywhere and at almost every moment of social reproduction imminent.

In social labour, there is always the creation of value and a creation of a construal about reality, involvement in this labour is a potential for political action that *could* inch towards the emergence of social reproduction. In contrast, proprietary labour sequesters value and shapes perceptions about social labour—hence the above-mentioned supposition about man, society and land. Social labour seeks to preserve the social as opposed to that which prioritises self-preservation.

An example that illustrates the dichotomy between social and proprietary labour is the individualisation intensified under the neoliberal period. The individualistic cultural turn during the neoliberal era, whether that is the proliferation of self-help literature, cosmopolitan feminism, GoFundMe and donation adjacent social welfare, carbon footprint, etc., is an intense focus on self-preservation. This proprietary labour frames societal issues as stemming from the self and are addressed by the self. It identifies the outcome and value of labour as belonging to the individual founded on the philosophies of 'deserving'. It is not surprising that, despite the proliferation of psychotherapy and its discourse, to the point where it has influenced the intellectual trajectory of philosophy in the 20th century, the prevalence of psychological illnesses is increasingly astronomical, unlike other fields of modern medicine.

In contrast, there is social labour that is practised in the shadows, carried out by the hidden labour class. Such as Herbert Storey, who initiated a Marxist circle in Khartoum when he was deployed there during World War II. Although only a few pages are dedicated to him, he established one of the two groups that would later make the Sudanese Communist Party that inadvertently influenced revolutionaries years to come, including Abdul Khaliq Mahjoub, who, in turn, inadvertently influenced the words on these pages. During the same period, Howard Zinn encountered a revolutionary in the U.S. Air Force who challenged the notion of fighting a 'just war.' Zinn would later become one of the main anti-war activists against the Vietnam war and one of America's significant historians in the 20th century. In contemporary times, Egyptian revolutionaries, moved by the unspeakable horrors of the genocide in Gaza, cross the border discreetly to join the Palestinian resistance. Or the countless immigrants and refugees risking their lives daily to cross borders, striving to send remittance back to their families who they may not hold again. This social labour is for the preservation of society and fosters emergence at every intersection. This social reproductive labour is where revolutionaries must create knowledge and challenge the set reproduction of society.

Retrospectively, social labour may be perceived as grand and culminating in historic events; however, such significant ruptures are almost always composed of the mundane tasks of conversation, repetition, reading, waiting, and introspection. It is founded on the principle of self-sacrifice (not self-affirmation), in that the preservation of the self is not guaranteed for a future that is not guaranteed. A week after Howard Zinn received a book by his comrade in the US Air Force, the comrade died in battle. Now that Zinn is dead, this revolutionary is lost and exists only in the shadows of Zinn's words.

The reactionaries have proposed an answer to atomisation, which manifests as aspirational individualism and consumerism. The liberal Left's answer to atomisation is autonomous identitarianism, and self-affirmation. Both responses to atomisation are non-disruptive to atomisation, in fact, they exacerbate and collapse into atomisation, which further alienates and reproduces these acquiescent responses to atomisation. This phenomenon is evident in attitudes and behaviors exhibited by both camps. Both answers are unsatisfactory because they are predicated on

the assumption of 'rational' self-interest. In reality, both positions exhibit a contempt for social labour, even though social labour and sacrifice are what humanity yearns for, as the essence of man is a drive to transcend. An answer then that needs to be advanced and advocated is social labour founded on sacrifice and faith. Sacrifice of the self for the social, and faith that this sacrifice will one day contribute to the overthrow of human exploitation and leads to freedom. The psycho-social emergence that accompanies this social labour and its intention is an answer to alienation that is not aspiration or anxious and paranoid of the death of the self.

Another difference between this theory of change and the liberal Left and neoliberal perspectives, is that it can be applied to organisations as well as individuals. For example, in trade unions, where there is a constant battle between the political and the economic, to resolve this is not to have a vanguard party where the cadres infiltrate these trade unions and move it towards a more ideological position that needs to be compromised to ensure union density. Instead, if labour is understood in a broader context—beyond the 8-8-8 hour division—trade unions should engage in all aspects of a worker's life. Not just the 8-hour work, but childcare, education, transport, healthcare, housing, mental health support, unemployment etc. This means that it should be extended to the unemployed, the youth, reproductive, domestic and emotional labour. Only then can a revolutionary trade union emerge, one that is based on an expansive social labour and not a consumeristic core where workers' wages and conditions is the be-all and end-all of trade-unions squabbles that will need to be renegotiated after every recession or inflationary period.

The case of the Sudan Workers' Trade Union Federation (SWTUF) is an informative example. In 1953, the SWTUF boasted an impressive membership of 100,000, functioning as an umbrella federation hosting many unions. Unfortunately, the SWTUF was tasked with negotiating employment terms, which primarily focused on the standard eight-hour workday. In April 1952, the federation called for the more politically ambitious action of striking to end British colonial rule. However, this call was not answered by the membership and the unions within the SWTUF began negotiating directly with the colonial government, ultimately undermining the federation. Again, in February 1953, a call to strike from the SWTUF went unanswered by members and the SWTUF

never recovered, delivering a major blow to organised labour in British ruled Sudan.

If trade unions do not position themselves as organisations that embrace a broad definition of social labour, they have no right to call for anything beyond the 8-hour working time. In retrospect, the situation in Sudan seems ironic, as colonial rule clearly affects the livelihood of everyone, including the standard eight-hour work period. However, because trade unions situate themselves to only these 8 hours, the social conditions that add to the exploitation within this timeframe remain unaddressed and are seen as beyond their jurisdiction... in colonial Sudan! Unfortunately, this pattern is evident in many trade unions today, which demonstrate minimal action in the face of the Zionist genocide of Palestinians.

Revolution is not a moment but hidden behind the monotony of the everyday.

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About Mohamed Khougali

Mohamed Khougali is a Sudanese socialist writer and psychological practitioner based in Germany, where he continues to organise and serves as president of Black Radicals. His work engages questions of liberation and collective struggle through the combined lenses of the Black radical tradition and psychological theory. Drawing on both intellectual and organisational practice, his research explores the relationship between race, class, colonialism, and subjectivity, with a particular focus on the psychological dimensions of political life and anti-colonial resistance.

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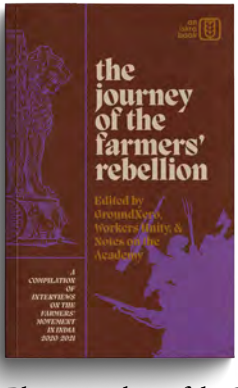
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Edited by
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A COMPILATION OF INTERVIEWS ON THE FARMERS' MOVEMENT IN INDIA 2020-2021

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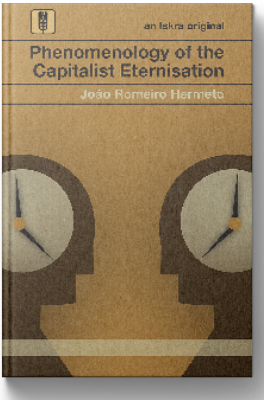

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—Momodou Taal, editor, *Vox Ummah*.

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Politically Unconscious: The Psychic Aftermath of the Sudanese Revolution is Mohamed Khougali's reflection on what it means to organize and think after a revolution has been usurped. Written as both a participant in Sudan's 2018–19 uprising and a working psychotherapist, Khougali weaves together a history of the Sudanese Left, an account of the current war and the racialized financialization that informed the various factions, alongside the development of a new clinical modality he calls "praxis psychotherapy."

Refusing the reductive binaries of international media coverage and the moral puritanism he sees paralyzing contemporary leftist thought, Khougali argues that Sudan cannot be understood apart from a longer "irrational revolution" linking Khartoum to Darfur, and Sudan to Palestine, through the same circuits of imperial accumulation and waste. At once political history and clinical experiment, ***Politically Unconscious*** is a work with lessons for comrades involved in the struggle—in Sudan, and far beyond.

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